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**STUDENTS IN A GLOBAL VILLAGE:
THE NEXUS OF CHOICE, EXPECTATION, AND EXPERIENCE
IN STUDY ABROAD**

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IN STUDY ABROAD**

by
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**STUDENTS IN A GLOBAL VILLAGE:
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Higher education today operates in a globalized environment. Within this setting, study abroad has been designated by the federal government as an educational tool to promote national security, U.S. leadership and active engagement in the international community. Roughly over 190,000 American students went abroad in 2003-2004. The 2005 Lincoln Commission report recommended that the U.S. send one million students abroad annually by 2017. This lofty goal will be difficult to obtain without having more comprehensive data on why and how students choose to study abroad.

The purpose of this study was to explore undergraduate student decision-making, expectation of and experience in study abroad. Factors that influence decision-making as well as expectations and on-site experiences were examined.

The researcher drew from students participating in the Commerce School of Business International Programs at Respected State University as the sample, using a college choice theoretical framework built on years of previous research on the tactics of college-bound students and the college student experience. The researcher utilized

qualitative research methods relying on interviews of the participants. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then coded. The data was member-checked and peer reviewed for validity. Surveys were employed to bolster interview data and to add reliability.

The Anderson Model of Study Abroad Choice and Model of Study Abroad Student Expectations provide two frameworks for how students make decisions and what they expect when studying abroad. Critical factors for these models included: travel and location, educational attainment, aspirations, background, cultural exposure, personal growth, language development, financial variables, social environment, and institutional climate and characteristics. The study also revealed that study abroad experience can be explained using Terenzini and Reason's (2005) college experience model.

The study contributes to the field of international education, academic affairs and student affairs by filling a large gap that exists in research on American students abroad. By examining the nexus between choice, expectation and experience in study abroad, the study provides rich data that can help to improve study abroad programming.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In November 2005, the Lincoln Commission, appointed by Congress and the President, recommended that one million students study abroad by 2017. In announcing the recommendations, M. Peter McPherson, chair of the Lincoln Commission, said, “Study abroad is not a frill. Greater engagement of American undergraduates with the world around them is vital to our nation’s national security, economic competitiveness and public diplomacy” (Associated Press, 2005, p. 1). Study abroad is a timely and important topic for higher education. The United States Senate has even designated 2006 as “The Year of Study Abroad,” encouraging all educational, business, and governmental programs to promote and expand study abroad programs (NAFSA, 2006).

This chapter serves as an introduction to the research. The background of study abroad will be examined first. Next, the problem statement and research questions provide a framework for the research. The method, scope, assumptions, limitations, and the significance of the research are detailed, as well as definitions of terms used in the study. The chapter concludes with an overview of the research.

Background

Considering the diverse nature of study abroad programs, getting the full picture of Americans going abroad to study is challenging. Though many organizations are involved with international education in the United States, the Institute of International Education (IIE) tracks study abroad statistics and is considered a fundamental source for national data. IIE publishes its annual “Open Doors” report with the results of its research; this report is funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational

and Cultural Affairs. This study abroad census is compiled from over 2,700 U.S. institutions of higher education. The report reveals that today, as forty years ago, the typical study abroad student is female, white, junior classification, and studies social sciences in a European country (IIE, 2005).

Looking at gender demographics, females dominate the American student population abroad. Roughly two-thirds of students studying abroad are female and this statistic has been stable since the 1980's (Dolby, 2004; O'Sullivan, 1996). Ethnically, an overwhelming 83% of U.S. students who undertake foreign study are white. Asian-Americans constitute 6%, while Hispanic-Americans and African-Americans represent 5% and 3% respectively (IIE, 2005).

In terms of field of study, the engineering and hard sciences send the fewest students abroad, while the humanities and social sciences send the most. Humanities and social science students comprise 35% of the population abroad. Business administration student numbers are on the rise and now consist of approximately 17% of the total abroad population. Math, engineering, agriculture, and physical science students combined make up only 12% of those who studied abroad in 2003-2004 (IIE, 2005).

By institutional classification, research universities send the most students abroad. A handful of these institutions send a large percentage of students. The top five sending schools are New York University, Michigan State University, University of California- Los Angeles, University of Texas at Austin, and Penn State University. Conversely, smaller schools generally send a larger proportion of their students abroad.

For example, a full two-thirds of the student population at Earlham College has studied abroad (Fain, 2005; IIE, 2005). Equally impressive numbers hold for small liberal arts schools such as St. Olaf's College (Minnesota), Lee University (Tennessee), and Wofford College (South Carolina) (IIE, 2005).

For study abroad destinations, Europe continues to attract the largest numbers of American students, followed by Latin America. IIE reports that individually Britain (U.K.), Italy, Spain, France and Australia were the top countries respectively for receiving American students in 2003-2004. The U.K. received over 32,000 American students that academic year. Australia is a destination on the rise for U.S. and other students around the world. In fact, Australia surpassed Britain and the U.S. worldwide as the favorite destination of foreign students, according to Cohen and the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2005).

Another interesting trend for 2003-2004 is the 36% increase in students traveling to Asia. China and India attracted significantly more students than the previous academic year. This trend is especially encouraging despite the SARS outbreak in spring 2003. The numbers of students studying in Asia are now even higher than pre-SARS levels though they only constitute 7% of the total (IIE, 2005).

The junior year is the most common time for undergraduates to study internationally. A mere 6% of all American study abroad participants spend a full academic year in another country (IIE, 2005). Another 38% of undergraduates who study abroad take part in a semester long program. These summer and other short-term programs are increasingly popular, with programs lasting less than eight weeks enrolling

nearly 46% of all study abroad students (Gray, Murdock & Stebbins, 2002).

Interestingly, the tragedy of September 11, 2001 did not shrink the numbers of U.S. students enrolling in foreign study programs (Dolby, 2004). In 2003-2004, over 180,000 Americans participated in study abroad (IIE, 2005). From these figures, it is clear that study abroad has a strong and storied history but the demographics have remained unchanged for many years.

The Problem Statement

The Lincoln Commission (2005) calls for over one million students to study abroad by the year 2017. This lofty goal appears unattainable without some change in attracting students, as only 190,000 students studied abroad during the 2003-2004 academic year (Institute for International Education [IIE], 2005). Though demographic information is compiled nationally, more in-depth research is needed on American students abroad.

In response to the lack of scholarly literature, the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) held roundtables at its 2005 annual conference to discuss the research agenda for study abroad. The result is a report that outlines five areas of needed research. One of those areas is decision-making, specifically what motivates students to go abroad and the interaction of the motivating factors. A related question that needs to be addressed is whether students are even aware of their decision-making process (Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE), 2005). There is an obvious need to examine student attitudes toward study abroad and to look more closely

at how these perceptions align with their actual experiences; therefore this study seeks to expand on this research.

Purpose

The primary goal of this study is to explore how and why students study abroad. Further, the study examines connections between their decision-making process and expectations of study abroad with their actual experiences.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study:

1. What factors influence students' decision to study abroad?
2. What are the students' academic, social, and personal expectations for studying abroad?
3. What were the students' experiences while abroad?
4. What implications do these findings have for the future of study abroad and higher education in American society?

Method

This study used mixed methods. The research is based on 20 interviews and 50 surveys with Respected State University (RSU) undergraduates who enrolled in one of the 27 Commerce School of Business study abroad programs during the fall of 2006 and spring of 2007. RSU is a large, public university in the northwestern U.S. with many nationally recognized academic programs like Commerce.

Interviews took place between September 2006 and March 2007. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and included questions about the students' decision-making strategies and expectations in choosing their study abroad program and the

students' experiences while in that program. A survey was utilized to collect demographics, decision-making processes, expectations, and study abroad experiences from a larger number of students. Demographic information was also collected from each student interviewed.

Scope of the Study

This study focused only on undergraduate students from the Commerce School of Business at Respected State University who participated in one of the International BBA Programs during the fall 2006 or spring 2007 semester. This study did not attempt to evaluate the participants' adjustment to life abroad or their intercultural competence. The study only explored student decision-making processes as related to deciding how and why to study abroad and their resulting experiences.

Assumptions and Limitations of Study

Assumption of this study are that students retained sufficient memory of their study abroad decision-making process and were able to articulate effectively these choices to the researcher. Whether or not students were conscious of these choice processes was in question (CIEE, 2005).

There were obvious limitations to this study. The students who volunteered for the study self-reported their decision-making processes and expectations before studying abroad and their experiences while studying abroad. Though difficult to verify, the researcher assumed the students' perceptions of their experiences are accurate. The study also relied on the researcher as the instrument which could lead to bias. Finally,

this study is limited to one academic year and one institution so longitudinal data was gathered.

Significance of the Study

Little research has been conducted in the area of study abroad decision-making and students' expectations of study abroad. While many studies have examined the outcomes of student experiences of study abroad, most have focused on foreign language acquisition, academic outcomes and personal growth (Carlson, Burn, Useem, & Yachimowicz, 1990; Dolby, 2004). Study abroad is increasingly cited as a critical need for today's college student. This need for international experience, coupled with the characteristics of the Millennial Generation and the new globalized economy, requires a thoughtful new approach in researching study abroad. This study explored trends in studying abroad, which can assist university administrators in both increasing the numbers of students who study abroad and providing accurate information for students who are in the decision-making process. Increasing the numbers of American college students abroad will assist future generations in maintaining and improving international relations. In addition, intercultural competence can assist Americans in their own communities as the U.S. population continues to become diversified.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

Academic Capitalism – “Groups of actors- faculty, students, administrators, and academic professionals- as using a variety of state resources to create new circuits of

knowledge that link higher education institutions to the new economy” (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004, p. 1)

Exchange Program – Negotiated partnership between two or more schools that results in an ongoing, administratively supported exchange of students who pursue equivalent but partial degree requirements for a fixed length of time (Teichler & Stuebe, 1991).

Globalization - The trend toward a global culture, global society, global capitalism, and global market (Welch, 2002).

Millennials – The generation of Americans born in or after 1982 who are currently the traditional college aged students (Howe & Strauss, 2007).

Overview

Chapter One provided a brief introduction and overview of the proposed study. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature, including globalization, Millennial students, college choice models, study abroad choice, and student experience. The research method is outlined in Chapter Three. The results are discussed in Chapters Four, Five, and Six while the implications of the study are detailed in Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the existing body of literature related to study abroad choice and experiences. Higher education today is situated in a globalized economy and is characterized by the rise of academic capitalism (Slaughter, 2004). In this environment, study abroad is being called upon to prepare future leaders to live and work in a global society (The Lincoln Commission, 2005). Those future leaders are members of the college student population today - the Millennial generation. This generation will be encouraged to undertake studies overseas, but not much is known about the actual process that students use in deciding to study abroad. Decision-making theories, such as college choice models, provide a framework to examine study abroad choices. In addition, little research has been done on the nexus between choice and the resulting overall experience.

This chapter provides a review of the literature related to study abroad research. The context of study abroad will be examined through history, globalization, academic capitalism, and the characteristics of the current Millennial generation. Selected research related to college choice, foreign student experience and college student experience will be reviewed and inform the proposed models for study abroad choice and experience.

Context

In our increasingly globalized society, the importance of study abroad is apparent now more than ever. To date, most study abroad research has centered on the benefits of

study abroad in language acquisition, academic outcomes, and personal growth (Dolby, 2004). These areas are traditionally accepted goals of foreign study programs. In addition, many study abroad programs are driven by the desire for multicultural and international exposure and appreciation. All of these advantages are cited by the Lincoln Commission (hereafter The Commission). The Commission, appointed by Congress in 2004 to develop a plan to increase study abroad participation nationwide, delivered its final report in December 2005. While only 190,000 students studied abroad in 2003-2004, the Commission set the goal of one million students studying abroad by 2017 (The Commission, 2005).

As The Commission outlines, study abroad is critical for the future of the United States and it provides four arguments why the U.S. should meet the one million student goal. Increased concern for national security coupled with the need for foreign language speakers represent two main arguments for study abroad. Other reasons include cultivating skilled U.S. leadership and providing active engagement in the world community.

The first argument for study abroad is national security, in the form of effective communication skills. Producing foreign language speakers is crucial as The Commission estimates that over 30,000 jobs per year related to national security require fluency in another language. Recent world events, in such places as Vietnam and the Middle East, have demonstrated that Americans are seriously deficient in foreign languages (The Commission, 2005).

Compared to most of the First World countries, the United States lags behind in the average number of languages spoken by its citizens. The U.S. Department of Education reports that only 44% of American high school students study foreign language and few U.S. students study more than the typical romance languages. The vast majority of high school students, in fact over 80%, study either Spanish or French. For undergraduates, the percentage is far less, with a mere 8% of undergraduates taking foreign language courses (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). As many research studies reveal, studying abroad assists students in learning and attaining advanced fluency in foreign languages (Carlson, 1990; Dolby, 2004).

The need for speakers of foreign languages is not a new issue. Study abroad funding increased exponentially following the exposure of American language deficiencies during World War II. In *The Tongue-tied American* (1980), the late Senator Paul Simon provides many reasons for the U.S. foreign language crisis, as he labeled it. Americanization encourages immigrants to lose their native language and culture. Simon details:

To speak another language has been a matter of shame, not pride. Even third, fourth and fifth generation Americans are caught in this. There is no sense that they have a resource, important to them personally and to the nation. So we have this unusual, deep-seated phenomenon: a historical and cultural barrier to the learning of another language in a land of great ethnic diversity. (p. 12)

Study abroad provides immersion in another language in a way that study in the U.S. cannot typically offer (Dolby, 2004).

A second aim of study abroad, as detailed by the Lincoln Commission (2005), is to increase U.S. leadership. As The Commission reports, most U.S. citizens have never been abroad and only 20% of Americans even hold passports. To continue to exercise leadership in the world arena, the U.S. must increase the number of young people with international experience. Study abroad is a natural avenue for this type of exposure.

Third, as traditionally known, study abroad provides valuable educational skill sets for the student. Study abroad can provide knowledge of other cultures and exposure to different societies. Often, students improve their interpersonal skills and critical thinking as a result of encountering ideas and cultures that are unlike their own.

Active engagement in the international community is the final goal of The Commission (2005). Studying in and communicating with other cultures produces an increased appreciation for world affairs. As the Commission's report relates, "Wise stewardship of the nation's well-being argues [that undergraduates]...serve as goodwill ambassadors throughout their lives" (p. vii). Indeed, one of the largest, multi-institutional, multinational databases, developed for the Study Abroad Evaluation Project (SAEP), has produced several studies on students before and after their foreign study experience. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) note that one significant piece of the SAEP data analyzed by Carlson, Burn, Useem and Yachimovicz (1990), followed students studying all over Europe. This research found statistically significant and substantial increases in students' knowledge of the culture, society, and politics of the

host country, even when controlling for over thirty variables, including gender, socioeconomic status age and past international experience (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The Lincoln Commission (2005) argues that this international knowledge is critical for the future of our nation.

History of Study Abroad

Studying abroad is not a new concept and its roots are ancient. Nelson (1995) writes that the history of study abroad is intertwined with the history of higher education. He explains that for many in search of wisdom in ancient times, travel was the only option. Travel was long, difficult and posed risks for scholars. Klineberg (1976), Fry (1984) and Nelson (1995) detail the influence of the Greeks and the attraction of their resources to draw scholars from all over Europe. For example, the Library and Museum at Alexandria were established by Ptolemy and attracted students such as Archimedes and Euclid (Nelson, 1995).

From the sixth to twelfth centuries, the decline of the Greek and Roman empires left the bulk of responsibility of higher education to the cathedrals and monasteries (Nelson, 1995). Documentation exists to paint a clear picture of student and master teacher migration in Medieval Europe starting in the twelfth century. German students, in particular, traveled to other countries to pursue their education. With the universities at Bologna, Paris and Oxford providing the highest quality education by medieval standards, many Germans felt they had no alternative but to leave their home country to pursue a degree. These students primarily studied law, philosophy, and theology (Courtenay, 2000).

By the late-thirteenth century, each university had its unique appeal; however, Bologna, prestigious for canon and civil law, drew the most foreign students. Proctor records show German students attended Bologna as early as 1289 (Courtenay, 2000). On the other hand, Paris was the preeminent school for theology, as was Oxford, to a lesser extent. Both Paris and Oxford witnessed an influx of German students following the Papal Schism of 1378. The Schism forced many students to leave Bologna and move to both Paris and Oxford to continue their studies. Consequently, some students experienced more than one university setting in their travels (Courtenay, 2000; Nelson, 1995).

In the mid-seventeenth century, American colonial colleges were products of the traditions at Oxford and Cambridge and later German graduate education. England and Scotland were influential to these early schools and provided a destination for study abroad as well. As the German influence increased in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the rise of the research university in the United States and accompanying emphasis on graduate education prompted more students traveled to continental Europe for their studies (Nelson, 1995).

The recent history of American undergraduates studying abroad intertwined with the rise of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These NGOs have been visionary leaders in the field of international education. One of the oldest of these organizations is the Institute of International Education (IIE), created in 1919. With the creation of the IIE, “international education as a component of higher education began to be acknowledged and addressed in an organized matter” (Mikhailova, 2003, p. 4). The

founders of the institute felt that international exchange was the strongest tool available in achieving long-lasting peace among nations (Mikhailova, 2003).

Although Americans had been traveling and studying in Europe for a century prior to World War I, the general American population held an isolationist attitude (Storer, 2004). Consequently, only a minute percentage of undergraduates actually studied abroad. Nelson (1995) notes that the first official study abroad program in the United States was established in 1923. This historic program involved an academic year in Paris, sponsored by the University of Delaware.

World War II disrupted and re-directed the way in which Americans undertook study abroad. With much of Europe ravaged, programs closed down. As Nelson (1995) relates, life in Europe during these years was difficult and disorganized. But after the dust settled from the war, other countries that escaped damage, like Switzerland, were explored and new programs were founded. Study abroad programs soon returned to business as usual (1995).

Massive expansion of study abroad occurred following World War II. The federal government, realizing the military need for foreign language speakers and cultural training, greatly expanded and increased funding to institutions of higher education for these purposes. At the national level, the Fulbright Act of 1946 funded international scholar exchanges to increase knowledge, understanding, and social connections with other countries. The Fulbright Program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State; however, as a leader in the field, IIE has administered the Fulbright

Program since its inception. Returning Fulbright scholars then facilitated the development of study abroad programs back at home in the United States (Storer, 2004).

The 1980s brought another expansion of programs. Nelson (1995) details that both the strength of the U.S. dollar abroad and the beginning of the democratization of study abroad contributed to this increase. Despite this growth, educators from NGOs and universities called for increasing the numbers of American students abroad and this recommendation continues to be espoused into the new Millennium Generation.

The Internet Age has generated a multitude of new private organizations and corporations engaged in the business of study abroad. Studyabroad.com and Global Learning Semesters are two prominent companies that utilize the worldwide web to advertise their programs. These programs typically include all that university-sponsored study abroad programs offer, such as orientation, housing, equivalent coursework, etc. These organizations offer still more alternatives in programs and locations for undergraduates to study abroad, which broadens the intercultural experiences needed to operate in our increasingly globalized world.

Globalization and Academic Capitalism

Higher education and study abroad take place in a globalized environment. Globalization is the trend toward a global culture, global society, global capitalism, and global market (Welch, 2002). The Internet, formation of world financial markets, and increase of international travel have all contributed to globalization (Marginson, 2000). In higher education, “evidence of globalization consists of commercialization within

international programs and activities, particularly evidence of what has been called academic capitalism, commodification and marketization” (Welch, 2002, p.4).

Slaughter and Rhoads (2004) also confirm that higher education is in an ascendant pattern of academic capitalism. They explain:

Academic capitalism sees groups of actors - faculty, students, administrators, and academic professionals - as using a variety of state resources to create new circuits of knowledge that link higher education institutions to the new economy...the theory of academic capitalism moves beyond thinking of the student as consumer to considering the institution as marketer. When students choose colleges, institutions advertise education as a service and a lifestyle.

(p. 1)

A central feature of this trend is student choice. Students currently on America’s college campuses are different than their predecessors and these differences require further exploration.

Millennial Students

Traditional undergraduate students today are part of the Millennial Generation. Born in or after 1982, these students started attending college in 2000. This newer generation is in contrast to Generation X (the generation preceding Millennials) and the Baby Boomers (the parents of the Millennials). The Millennial Generation is poised to shape the nation as they move through our universities and into the workforce (Howe & Strauss, 2007)..

In Howe and Strauss' book *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (2000), these students are seen as a positive force in American culture. Howe and Strauss elaborate:

As a group, Millennials are unlike any other youth generation in living memory. They are more numerous, more affluent, better educated, and ethnically more diverse. More important, they are beginning to manifest a wide array of social habits...including a new focus on teamwork, achievement, modesty and good conduct...Over the next decade, the Millennial Generation will entirely recast the image of youth from downbeat and alienated to upbeat and engaged – with potentially seismic consequences for America (p. 4).

Howe and Strauss continued their research in 2007 with *Millennials Go to College*. In this work, they elaborate on Millennial traits and themes. The authors describe seven core traits of the Millennial Generation: Special, Sheltered, Confident, Team-Oriented, Conventional, Pressured, and Achieving. Also, these students are associated with “helicopter parents” and have a new appreciation of diversity. Not only will Millennials continue to enroll in colleges and universities but they will undoubtedly influence the future of our nation. As a newer force in American culture, Millennial college students demand attention; however, additional research on these students is needed.

Select Study Abroad Choice Research

Only a handful of studies have been conducted specifically on student choice and study abroad. Carlson, Burn, Useem and Yachimowicz (1990) published their landmark report on the extensive Study Abroad Evaluation Project (SAEP). SAEP looked at motivation and expectation in study abroad, student experience and long-term effects of study abroad on undergraduates from two American universities. In terms of student choice, the researchers asked via questionnaire how students heard about the study abroad program, the reasons that influenced their decision to study abroad and the people who most influenced their desire to study abroad.

The SEAP Project (1990) showed that students decided to journey abroad largely for international cultural and language experiences. Second to these aims was the expectation that study abroad would improve career prospects. Academic offerings were only of moderate importance. Expectations of students' experiences of study abroad correlated highly with the reporting of their actual experiences. Typically these expectations were of cultural experiences, language, history, and politics (Carlson, Burn, Useem, & Yachimowicz, 1990).

Chieffo's (2000) quantitative study at the University of Delaware examined the determinants of student participation in study abroad programs. She found that the determining factors of participation fell into five main categories: 1) financial, 2) social, 3) academic, 4) personal, and 5) institutional. Her survey showed that students obtain the greatest amount of study abroad information from their friends and classmates. Parental influence, both general and financial, is also important; however, the study

revealed a lack of influence from faculty. Overall, Chieffo's (2000) research found that students were poorly informed about study abroad and the programs available to them.

In another related study, Booker (2001) examined the motivational differences between study abroad applicants and non-applicants. His theoretical base was three-pronged. First, he utilized Ajzen's 1991 work on the Theory of Planned Behavior, taken from Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) Theory of Reasoned Action. The Theory of Planned Behavior suggests that the intended behavior is determined by three constructs: attitude, social norms, and perceived behavior control. Secondly, Booker used the Consumer Decision-Making model by Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (1995). This model describes how people recognize a need, search for options, evaluate alternatives, and decide what to buy. Finally, he employed Kotler's (1988) concept of buyer readiness. Buyer readiness involves the transitional process from being unaware of a product to then intending to purchase the product.

Booker's (2001) research found that study abroad applicants were less dependent on financial assistance to attend college. Applicants tended to be more interested in cultural immersion and they started exploring study abroad options earlier than non-applicants. Lastly, applicants perceived the university as supportive of international education and study abroad opportunities. Overall, the independent factors that directly influenced the decision to apply to a study program were academic relationships, financial concerns and personal direction of family and friends.

In a 2003 study, Peterson looked at the opinions and experiences of study abroad participants at Michigan State University to develop a theoretical model to guide

effective communication strategies to improve undergraduate study abroad recruitment. Specifically, she examined the attitudes and norms that influenced the student decision-making process, the relative importance of study abroad issues, and the messengers of those issues (Peterson, 2003).

Echoing Booker's study, Peterson's (2003) primary theoretical foundation for the study was drawn from Azjen and Fishbein's (1980) Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). TRA states that the best predictor of behavior is the intent to behave. TRA is based on two main assumptions. The first is that people make rational decisions using available information and that second, people consider possible outcomes before choosing to act or not to act. Her study revealed that financial information is needed most for students to make the decision to study abroad, followed by the benefits and rewards of study abroad.

While these study abroad choice studies are significant, there is no research available linking student choice with student experience. In addition, these three dissertation studies were quantitative. Qualitative research can assist in gathering more nuanced, detailed information utilizing the student voice. Further, the available research on college choice provides theoretical models that are supported by years of research already conducted on college students and therefore, readily transferable to choice in study abroad.

College Choice Research

Due to the lack of theoretical models for student decision-making in study abroad, the literature from college choice research can provide guidance. Many

similarities exist between deciding to attend college and deciding to study abroad. First, both choices involve a substantial financial commitment over a considerable amount of time. Second, each involves a consideration of location, typically some distance away from home. Third, academic quality and issues of reputation or prestige must be weighed. Overall, like the college choice experience, deciding to study abroad involves a complex set of factors that students must weigh before they make a significant choice.

College choice research is dominated by three main approaches. One approach is economic, centering on the assumption that prospective college students are rational actors who make careful cost-benefit analyses when choosing a college or university (Hossler, Schmidt, & Vesper, 1999). A second approach based in sociology employs status-attainment models. Status-attainment models examine a variety of social and individual factors, including social class, race, and gender, that lead to occupational and educational aspirations. The analysis of the impact of social status on both aspirations of college attendance and inequities in college access are critical in these models.

The third way for researchers to explain student decision-making is with a combined model. Combined models share components of both economic and status-attainment models. Typically combined models involve three stages of student decision-making. Initially, students' aspirations develop as does an assessment of resources, yielding evaluation criteria. Next, these criteria are used as students examine their options and make primary exclusions. Finally, students look at the remaining alternatives and make a selection (Jackson, 1982). A hybrid-combined model will be

utilized as the conceptual framework for this study and it is detailed at the end of this chapter.

Foreign Student Experience

Choice in study abroad is an important consideration, as is the experience of study abroad. Research has been done regarding college student experience in general (see for example, Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Reason, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2004), as well as foreign student adjustment. Most of the foreign student adjustment research has been conducted on students studying in the United States (Altbach, 1991; Eide, 1970; Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Lysgaard, 1955). Fewer studies have been conducted on American students' experience in other countries on study abroad programs. Further, "the research that has been conducted in study abroad generally has been unscientific and primarily focused on evaluation/satisfaction measures or impact studies of the study abroad experience. The lack of journal articles, professional seminars and presentations underscores the absence of focused study in this area" (Peterson, 2003, p. 8).

Brenner (2003) details the reasons for the lack of research on sojourners. Gaining access to these participants is time-consuming and logistically difficult and in addition, this type of research is expensive and the physical divide between home administrators and administrators at the host university makes coordination difficult. Historically, most of the research in this area has been conducted by doctoral candidates for dissertation purposes. However, there are some general theories of foreign experience that have been more widely researched.

In 1955, Lysgaard proposed the best known and widely discussed theory related to students experiencing another culture in an educational environment. He investigated Norwegian Fulbright participants studying in the United States. His study can be summarized by two main points. First, adjustment to a foreign country tends to be general rather than specific. That is, adjustment is a process of accumulation; it tends to be equally good or equally bad overall. Second, adjustment to a foreign place over time can be represented by the *U-Curve*. At first a student's experience seems easy, then follows a crisis period marked by loneliness and a need for integration. Afterwards, the student adjusts and feels better about her experience. This initial study spawned many additional studies on foreign student adjustment.

One such report, authorized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is titled *Students as Links between Cultures* (1970). This collection of studies parses out data collected from students all over the world, both on permanent and temporary sojourn. Data were collected from Egyptian, Iranian and Indian students studying in the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom. These studies focused on cultural differences and their role in foreign student adjustment.

In a comprehensive, mixed methods study, Klineberg and Hull (1979) examined coping and adaptation of foreign students in 11 countries. This study did not support the U-curve hypothesis. Their data revealed a wide variety of difficulties faced by a large number of students in all countries, but found that students were considered to be adjusted after roughly one month in their host country. The authors also discussed

culture shock, the misunderstanding of social cues and norms from one culture to another (p. 31). Further, the return home can cause problems for students as well. One example of this type of issue is feeling like a foreigner in one's own country when attempting to reintegrate into society.

Despite its wide appeal, there is little empirical evidence that universally supports the U-curve hypothesis (Kealey, 1989; Zapf, 1991). Others report a reverse U-curve, a linear increase or no change at all. A study by Brenner (2003) is one of the few that corroborate the U-curve hypothesis. In fact, his research was focused on American students abroad and his results suggest that sociocultural adjustment decreases sharply when sojourners are in a new culture but then increases steadily within approximately a two-month time period.

As it has been illustrated, little research has been conducted solely on American study abroad students. The bulk of foreign student research concentrates on foreign students who travel and live abroad to obtain a degree. The goals of these two populations are not the same and since most American college students study abroad for a semester or less (IIE, 2005), these studies may not lend themselves well to explaining American undergraduate experiences.

Student decision-making in study abroad is a newer field of inquiry that must be expanded. Student choice is an important component of study abroad and higher education in the globalized world. A hybrid-combined college choice model utilized by Somers et al. (2005) and Stokes and Somers (in press), coupled with Terenzini and Reason's (2005) college experience model, provide a framework with which to

systematically examine student decision-making processes and their subsequent experience abroad.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used for this study was two-fold. The first framework, used to examine the choice dimension, was developed by Somers, Haines, Keene, Bauer, Pfeiffer, and McCluskey (2005) and reflects a hybrid-combined model of college choice (Figure 1). This model reflects the complex, multi-faceted process that is involved in college choice (Litten, 1982).

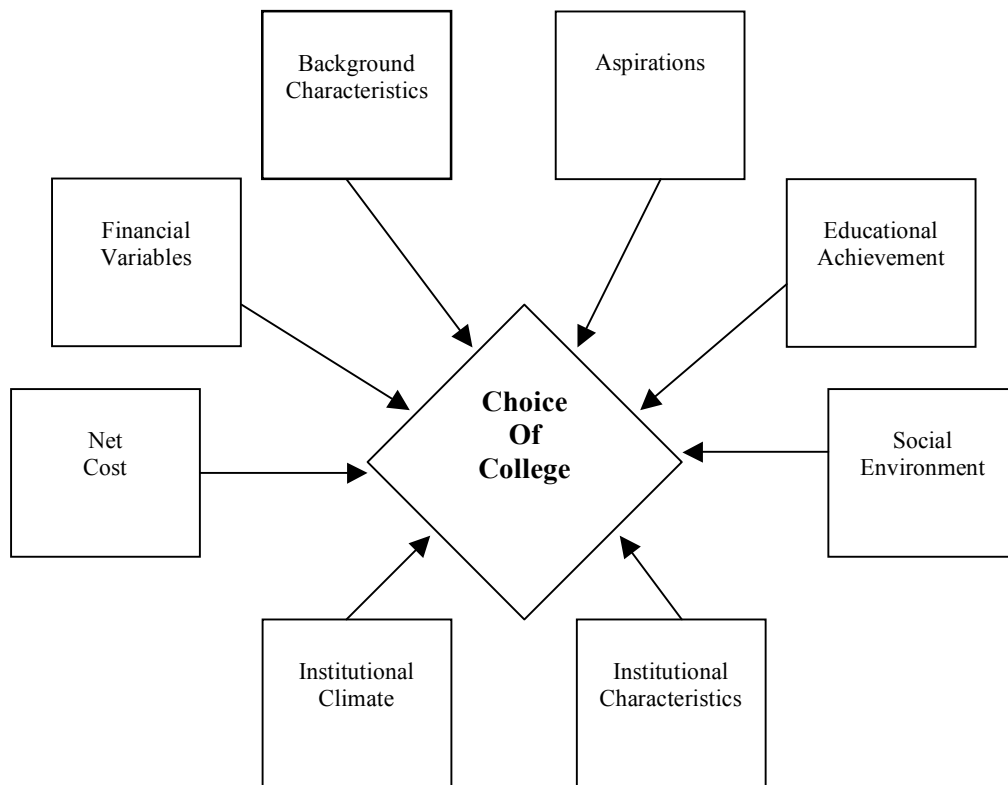


Figure 1. Somers et al. (2005) conceptual framework for college choice

According to Somers et al. (2005), the eight factors that combine to make this hybrid model are background characteristics, aspirations, educational achievement, social environment, financial variables, net cost, institutional climate, and institutional characteristics. Background characteristics include gender, socio-economic status, race, and ethnicity (Hanson & Litten, 1982; Jackson, 1982). There are a variety of social and individual factors that lead to occupational and education aspirations. These aspirations, coupled with real-world effects, influence educational attainment, including college entry (Jackson, 1982). In addition, a student's social environment, including family and peers, influence college choice (Hossler & Gallegher, 1987).

Financial variables are another component of the college choice framework. The financial variables include actual dollar amounts for college attendance, for example, living expenses and tuition. Other important financial variables include student perceptions of the costs of college attendance (St. John, 1990, 1991).

St. John and Starkey's (1995) work on the net cost of university education offers another critical component to the choice model. Their study suggests that students respond to a set of prices and subsidies and these responses vary over the course of a college career. That is, decisions made at first-time enrollment are different than persistence decisions. Their study found that low-income students were the most price responsive to tuition. Further, the authors found a negative-price response with grants which they interpreted as meaning the aid awarded was not sufficient or not appropriate (St. John & Starkey, 1995).

Institutional characteristics and institutional climate are two related but distinct elements of the college choice model. Institutional characteristics include the type of school, faculty, class sizes, and academic program (Hanson & Litten, 1982; Hossler et al., 1989). Institutional climate refers to the social atmosphere of a campus and a student's perception of their "fit" at the institution (Chapman, 1984; Hanson & Litten, 1982).

In addition to these factors, the study abroad literature suggests that other factors need to be included. Location of study abroad destination is critical, as is language development and related skill acquisition (Altbach, 1991; Dolby, 2004; Eide, 1970). Cultural exposure is another motivating factor (Carlson et al., 1990). These factors are incorporated into a proposed model of study abroad choice for undergraduates (Figure 2).

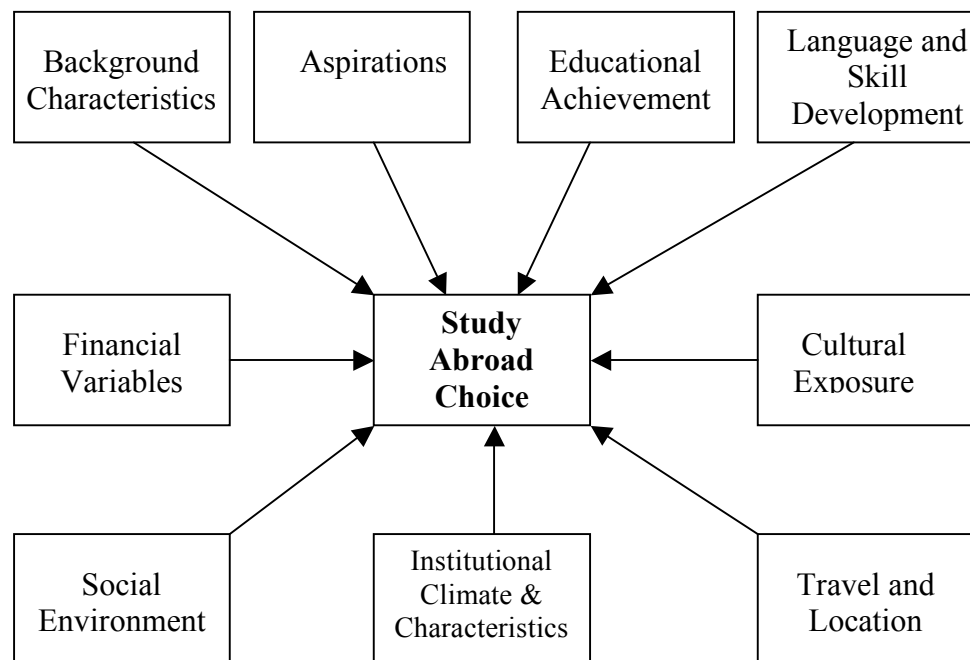


Figure 2. Anderson's proposed framework for study abroad choice

In addition to the choice aspect of this study, the experience of study abroad will be investigated as well. A second conceptual framework is necessary to capture the complexities of college student experience. Terenzini and Reason's (2005) conceptual framework of college student experience will examine students' experience abroad (see Figure 3). The Terenzini and Reason college experience model draws on years of college experience research (see for example, Astin, 1993 and Pascarella & Terenzini, 2004). The model reflects the multiple forces operating in multiple settings that influence student learning and persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2004). This interconnectedness is reflected in the four co-variants of the Terenzini and Reason model.

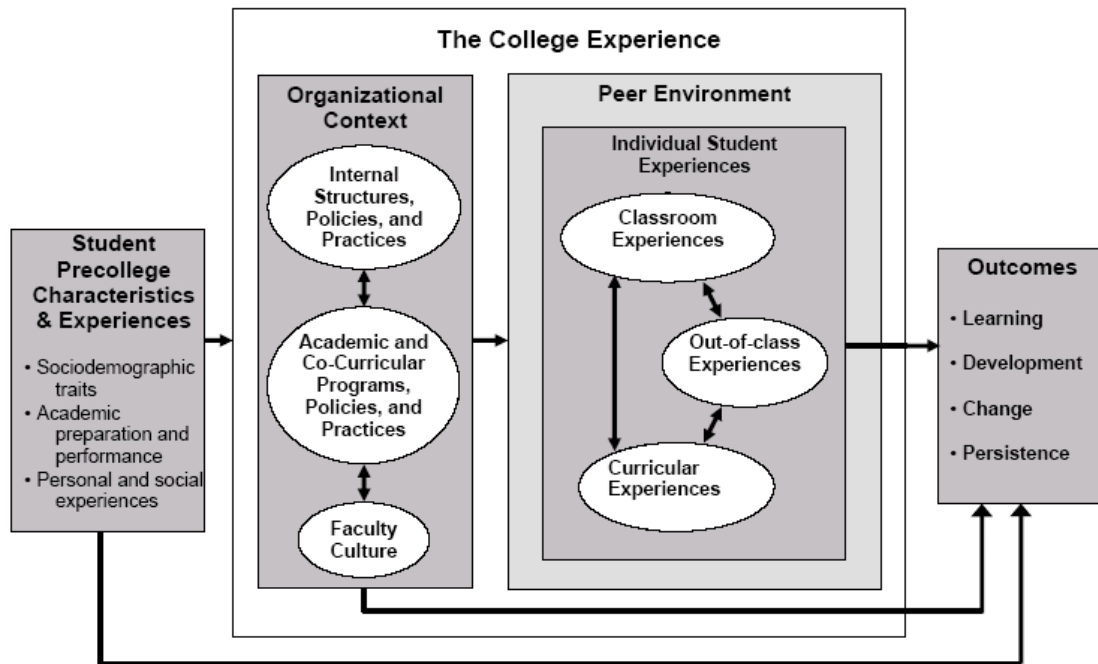


Figure 3. Terenzini and Reason's (2005) model of college student experience

The first set of constructs related to college experience, student pre-college characteristics and experiences, is similar to other college impact models (Astin, 1993). These include background, academic preparation, disposition, and social experiences. Demographic characteristics are included as well, such as race, ethnicity, age, gender, family income etc.

The second set of constructs in the Terenzini and Reason model is the organizational context of the institution. Most important are the organizational character and culture immediate to the student. The authors note that three facets of organizational context have the most effect on students. The first facet are the internal

structures, policies, and practices of an institution. These include budgets, staff support, operating characteristics, etc. Second, curricular and co-curricular programs, policies, and practices affect students' experience. These include the intended, enacted, and received practices of the university. The most critical are personnel policies and practices of those with the most student contact, namely faculty and student affairs staff. Programmatic policies and practices related to students affect student experience as well, for example, learning communities, mentoring programs, and orientation. Finally, the faculty culture of an institution is a large component of the organizational context of an institution. Faculty culture reflects the philosophy of education of an institution and also the formal and informal availability of faculty to students.

The third aspect of the Terenzini and Reason model of college student experience is peer environment. As Astin (1993) states, a student's peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years. The peer environment refers to more than a student's circle of friends. Peer environment includes the entire ethos of the student body – their norms, values, and beliefs. Terenzini and Reason (2005) report that students are influenced by a subtle push to conform to the wider student body norms.

Finally, the fourth component of the college experience framework consists of the individual student experiences. For Terenzini and Reason (2005), these experiences fall into three main categories: curricular, classroom experience, and extracurricular. Curricular experience involves a student's interactions with general education courses, coursework in the major, and other academic experiences. Classroom experience is a

consequence of pedagogical exposure and professor feedback. Finally, the individual student experiences are those occurrences out-of-class which encompass living situation, working, family support and co-curricular involvement.

Taken together, the Terenzini and Reason (2005) components reflect the complexity of the undergraduate student experience, just as the Somers et al. (2005) model demonstrates the multifaceted nature of college choice. Past research by St. John (1990, 1991, 1995) links college choice with student persistence. Using both of these models to examine student choice and experience in study abroad, the nexus between the two will be investigated as well as implications for students and administrators.

Summary

The lack of a comprehensive model for study abroad choice and experience requires further research in this area. The relevant literature assists in providing a foundation to conduct a study to investigate the nexus between study abroad choice and experience. Viewed within the context of history, globalization, academic capitalism, and the Millennials, study abroad requires further analysis.

Selected literature on college choice, foreign student experience, and college student experience inform this research. A more complete conceptual framework to examine the connections between the choices a student makes to study abroad and the subsequent experience is best served with the dual models: one model of college choice (Somers et al., 2005) and one of college student experience (Pascarella & Reason, 2005). These models are well-equipped for the complexity of study abroad choice and

experience. This nexus between choice and experience is highly relevant to study abroad research.

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

With no theoretical model available regarding student choice in study abroad (Peterson, 2003), additional research is needed. Research on American students studying abroad has been limited (Peterson, 2003). In addition, the research that exists is predominately quantitative in nature, relying on questionnaire data (Booker, 2001; Chieffo, 2000; Peterson, 2003). Further, since study abroad is a considerable investment of time and money, university administrators, parents, and students can all benefit from more knowledge in this area. This research will reveal more about Millennial college students in general but it will also identify how to better manage their expectations for study abroad. Certainly more research is needed, and the complex choice process requires in-depth examination that is appropriate for qualitative techniques.

This chapter reintroduces the purpose of the study and outlines the methods employed. This chapter also describes the sample, data collection, and data analysis utilized to examine student decision-making, expectation, and experience in study abroad. The study uses mixed methods including interviews and surveys. The interviews explored student decision-making processes before departure and subsequent experiences while abroad. A survey was used to gather supplemental information from a larger number of students. This chapter concludes with a timeline and the limitations of the study.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

Though there is a considerable body of research on foreign students in the United States (Altbach, 1991; Eide, 1970; Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Lysgaard, 1955), there appears to be a scarcity of research on American students studying abroad in other countries. This research study investigated how students choose to study abroad and their resulting experiences abroad. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What factors influence students' decision to study abroad?
2. What are the students' academic, social, and personal expectations for studying abroad?
3. What were the students' experiences while abroad?
4. What implications do these findings have for the future of study abroad and higher education in American society?

Ultimately, this study explored the nexus of student choice, expectation and experience in study abroad.

Qualitative Overview

The research perspective for the study was qualitative and interpretivist. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative data “are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts” (p. 1). Further, the strengths of qualitative data are many. Qualitative research focuses on everyday events in natural settings which allow the researcher to understand real life. This local groundedness is due to the close proximity of the researcher to the situation; context is therefore taken into account. This context leads to “rich” and “thick

descriptions...with a strong potential for revealing complexity” (Miles & Huberman, 1990, p. 10). Ultimately, qualitative data and its emphasis on lived experience are suitable for locating meaning that people place in their everyday existence and the connections of those meanings to the greater world around them (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Research Design

The researcher secured permission from the Commerce undergraduate deans to solicit student volunteers who were studying abroad in the spring of 2007. Emails were sent to solicit volunteers for both the survey and interviews. The survey email contained a weblink that connected students to the online survey conducted through Survey Monkey.

Data were collected through personal interviews. Sessions were digitally recorded and audio files were numerically identifiable. After the interview, students were given the opportunity to ask their own questions, and they were provided the contact information of the primary investigator for any follow-up questions or concerns. Pseudonyms were assigned to each interviewee while survey respondents remained anonymous. Files were maintained at the researcher’s private residence in a secured and locked cabinet.

An online survey was also conducted to gather a wider range of data. Students were surveyed about their decision-making process, their expectations for studying abroad and their experiences abroad. The surveys on choice and expectation were tabulated and analyzed before interviews took place. A follow-up survey was

administered approximately six weeks after student departure in order to ascertain their early experiences with the study abroad program. Though survey participants were anonymous, pseudonyms were assigned for reporting purposes. By using interviews and surveys, both depth and range of data was gained.

Finally, the researcher utilized field notes and memos to fill in the gaps of participant data and to offer additional perspective. The researcher as instrument was critical in this study. These notes and memos provide a strong foundation for research validity and reliability while adding nuance and context, additionally revealing future research questions and supplying a method to track the process of the study.

Sources of Data

Data was collected from two main sources: surveys and interviews. Survey and interview protocols are included in Appendices 1 and 2. Table 1 details which aspects of the research design address each research question. Demographic information was also gathered from all participants.

Table 1: *Items in the Research Design Protocols that Correspond to the Research Questions*

	<i>Surveys</i>	<i>Interviews</i>
Research Question 1: What factors influence students' decision to study abroad?	Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q16	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q7
Research Question 2: What were the students' expectations for studying abroad?	Q14	Q5
Research Question 3: What were students' experiences abroad?	Q15	Q6

Participants

Participants were solicited via email from the Commerce School of Business (Commerce) at RSU. RSU is a large, public university in the Northwest. The undergraduate program at the Commerce School of Business maintains its own BBA International Program. The BBA International Program works in conjunction with the university-wide Study Abroad Center to send students abroad. In general, both RSU and the Commerce School send a sizable number of students to study abroad. In 2003-2004, RSU sent 2,058 students abroad, with 556 of those students coming from the Commerce School. Nationally, RSU ranks fourth in the total number of participants in study abroad programs.

Permission was secured from the undergraduate deans at the Commerce School to survey and interview business students while at their partner schools across Europe. A letter of invitation to complete the surveys and participate in the interviews was sent via email to all accepted participants for the Commerce International Programs. The researcher attended the Commerce BBA International Programs pre-departure orientation session to provide additional information on the study. All interviews took place between October 2006 and March 2007.

Method

This section will address the specific method by which interviews and surveys were conducted, the population that was utilized, and the means by which the interview data was examined.

The sample was drawn from Commerce undergraduates who are studying abroad at one of the Commerce European partner schools via exchange programs. The researcher secured Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval prior to interviewing. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. All interviews were conducted in a private office or meeting room and they were digitally recorded for purposes of transcription. Commonly referred to as a “semi-structured interview,” the interview method allows for a certain level of consistency while allowing for some flexibility. An effort was made to remain consistent with the set of questions asked; however, there were occasions when additional questions were improvised to further explore a particular point, or to further investigate a unique piece of information. Some of the interviews were conducted in a focus group format to maximize both participants’ and researcher’s available time. Time was limited due to the overseas travel required to gather the data and student availability.

Data Collection

The data for this research came from surveys and interviews completed voluntarily by students enrolled in the Commerce School of Business International Exchange Programs in the spring 2007 semester. Surveys were conducted via Survey Monkey, a web service that allows users to create surveys online. Survey Monkey assigns a web link to a survey and this web link was sent to the participant pool of Commerce students who would be studying abroad in spring 2007. Survey Monkey allows for anonymity of the participant while allowing the researcher to control who has

access to the survey. Pre-departure web surveys and interviews were conducted in November 2006.

During the interviews, in addition to answering questions, each student was asked to write out their own process map for study abroad. Questions in the interview ask the students to describe their study abroad choice process, from awareness of the existence of study abroad through applying and being accepted into their study abroad program. The researcher also asked about their expectations of studying abroad. Demographic data was also gathered for each participant. I also reviewed the individual student process map to verify my understanding to reflect the student's intended meaning.

Next, the researcher traveled abroad to the partner schools to interview onsite to learn about the study abroad experience. These schools, as well as RSU and the Commerce School, have been masked for anonymity. These schools include University of Surrey (England), Universita de Negocios (Barcelona, Spain), Magnifique (Paris, France), and Leonardo (Milan, Italy). The second round of web surveys and interviews were conducted in March 2007 while the students were abroad in their respective programs. Students were asked about their study abroad experiences and how their expectations matched their actual experiences. At the conclusion of every interview, notes were read back to the participant to check for clarification and accuracy.

By interviewing onsite, the researcher hoped to counter what other researchers have referred to as the "sleeper effect" (Klineberg & Hull, 1979), an attitudinal change over time. Attitudes can be considerably different immediately after an event, as

compared to after a certain amount of time. If the experience becomes more positive over time, this phenomenon can be called the “halo effect” (Klineberg & Hull, 1979).

Data Coding

The college choice conceptual framework for this study provides common factors from which a preliminary start list of codes was developed (Table 2).

Table 2: *College Choice Start Codes*

Code	Definition
BG	Background Characteristics
A	Aspirations
FV	Financial Variables
NC	Net Cost
SC	Social Environment
CH	Institutional Characteristics
IC	Institutional Climate
EA	Educational Attainment

Similarly, a list of start codes was developed from the college experience framework, as proposed on the following page (Table 3).

Table 3: *College Experience Start Codes*

Start Code	Definition
BG	Student Characteristics and Experiences (Background)
OC-I	Organizational Context- Internal
OC-C	Organizational Context- Curricular and Co-Curricular
OC-F	Organizational Context- Faculty Culture
PE	Peer Environment
ISE-C	Individual Student Experience- Curricular
ISE-R	Individual Student Experience- Classroom
ISE- O	Individual Student Experience- Out-of-Class

This coding scheme was utilized but open coding with no start codes was also conducted to ensure that the same categories emerged from the data.

Analysis

The first dataset was collected via an online survey. The survey questions were tabulated by number and percentage, by count or by average, depending on the particular survey question. Initial results of the survey on choice and expectation allowed the researcher to compare trends to the start codes formulated from the literature and make adjustments to the coding scheme. Lincoln and Guba (1985) call this technique “filling in,” or the restructuring of a coding scheme as the data set emerges. This process continued throughout data collection.

The basic analysis of the qualitative data began with the first interview. The researcher took notes which allowed for themes to emerge even before the data was transcribed and analyzed. Interviews and open-ended portions of the survey were transcribed. Using the start codes from the previous section, coding was done manually. The researcher looked for trends and themes consistent with college choice and foreign student experience. The process maps that the students themselves created during the interviews were also coded. Since new patterns, themes, and codes may be realized with every new set of interview transcripts, past transcripts were reassessed based on the newly identified constructs. This initial pattern coding allowed a large amount of data to be reduced and channeled into smaller concepts (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Next, the researcher utilized these smaller clusters of data to examine different levels of data. Clustering involves looking at different levels of data to try to better understand a phenomenon. For example, when investigating study abroad choice and experience, the *actions* of students can be critical. Also important are the *actors* involved in the study abroad experience. Another layer of data to investigate is the *processes* with which students choose and then experience studying abroad. All of these clusters can assist the researcher in the “process of moving to higher levels of abstraction” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 250).

Open coding was also conducted by round and collection type to ensure that the findings were similar to the analysis done with the start codes based on the literature. At the end of open coding, there were four batches of coded data: round one survey, round one interview, round two survey, and round two interview. Themes quickly emerged.

The researcher arranged the coded data by research question. One batch of coded data represented the factors that students used to study abroad, a second batch represented their study abroad expectations and the last batch represented their study abroad experiences. In this way, codes could be looked at across data type and examined topically for patterns and relationships.

To illustrate the coding process, “Travel” was a common theme that emerged from the data. Every instance of the word “travel” was counted and coded for its context. For example, some instances of “travel” were related to the first research question, the decision making process. Some students mentioned that previous travel led them to want to study abroad or that the opportunity to travel during study abroad was a factor. Travel was also a theme for the second research question of student expectations for study abroad. Many students expected to travel and later, they reported various travel experiences, related to research question three.

Additionally, coding was conducted according to the start codes based on research from Somers et al (2005) and Pascarella and Reason (2005). This data was then compared to the proposed model for study abroad choice and the college student experience model. An instance of “Travel” might be coded as part of the decision making process as Student Background if it related to previous travel or travel by parents. Or another instance of travel might be coded as an Outcome as a part of the student experience. Coding was done until no additional themes or categories could be extrapolated from the data.

In addition, the researcher constantly kept memos of thoughts and ideas as she spent so much time with the data. Memos are particularly helpful in conceptually tying data together. The emphasis in memo writing is on the insights and ideas that arise when working with data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The memos proved useful throughout the writing process.

Timeline

The timeline for this study was as follows:

- September 2006 - Committee approval obtained; Proposal defended, Institutional Review Board approval obtained.
- October 2006 - April 2007- Research conducted; Data transcribed
- April 2007 – June 2007- Data interpreted and analyzed
- July 2007 - Study completed

Limitations

There are several limitations in this type of study, as noted by Miles and Huberman (1990). First, students volunteered for the study. The researcher solicited participants from Commerce International Programs who were willing to be involved. The sample was not representative of all college students; though, outside of major, the sample was representative of the national study abroad population. Second, the researcher relied on students to self-report their attitudes and decision-making processes as accurately as possible. Also, the study relied on the researcher as the instrument which can lead to bias at the site. Finally, though a multi-institutional and longitudinal

study would provide the greatest breadth and depth of data, this study is restricted to one institution and one academic year.

Assumptions

I did not study abroad as an undergraduate but my previous experience with undergraduate study abroad led me to pursue this research. I worked for the Commerce School as an academic advisor for nearly four years and many of my students went abroad in exchange and other types of programs. In summer 2004, I was selected to be the Study Abroad Liaison for the Business Law Program at Commerce. I lived at the University of Edinburgh for the summer with 27 undergraduate students from UT Austin. I was responsible for programming cultural, co-curricular events, working with the host institution and making sure that the students fulfilled their obligations to the program and university housing. It was a life-changing experience that led me to consider international higher education as a field of study and employment.

I have to acknowledge that my personal experience with study abroad is that leads me to believe that it is a worthy endeavor for both students and universities. Over one summer, I watched the undergraduates on my program mature and learn about the larger world around them while gaining classroom knowledge as well. In addition, in my years as an advisor, I heard study abroad decision-making, expectations and experiences first-hand, before the start of my dissertation research.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, also called validity, is essential to the credibility of any study. To ensure trustworthiness and the rigor of this study, the researcher utilized peer

debriefing and member checking. Peer debriefing is an effort to alleviate biases of the researcher and to ensure credibility of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) define peer debriefing as “a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (p. 308). Doctoral candidates from the researcher’s department served as peer debriefers for this study.

Member checking was also employed to ensure trustworthiness. The interview content was read back to the participant to check for accuracy. The participants had the opportunity to verify and ensure that their views were appropriately characterized and interpreted. Participants were asked and allowed to ask questions throughout the process. The participant was given the researcher’s contact information for follow-up.

As Miles and Huberman (1990) note, checking for researcher effects is critical. From the initial meeting with participants to the conclusion of the study, the researcher’s intentions were overt. The researcher made every attempt to spend time with the participants, from pre-departure orientation to the end of the study, to ensure that the researcher profile was more familiar. These tactics help to stem researcher effects.

Finally, triangulation was employed. By corroborating the information gathered from the different data types, surveys and interviews, findings can be strengthened. The aim of triangulation is to choose complementary data sources. Even by uncovering conflicting data, triangulation forces the researcher to consider complex explanations.

Findings are validated by multiple sources and multiple instances, using more than one method such as interviews and surveys (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Summary

This chapter outlined the basic methodology and research techniques that were employed in this study. A qualitative methodology was utilized and rooted in an interpretivist paradigm. Data was collected through interviews and surveys of students who were studying abroad via Commerce International Programs. The findings provide insight for both students and university administrators on the choice, expectation, and experience of study abroad. In this way, students and administrators have models with which to make the study abroad process more attractive, accessible, and achievable for today's college student.

CHAPTER FOUR: CHOICE FINDINGS

Overview

To provide the rich description that is expected in qualitative research, the researcher made an effort to retain the students' voice. To that end, Chapters four, five, and six represent the thematic findings of the research questions. This research study indicates that there are many factors that influence the student decision-making process when considering study abroad; these factors can be illustrated by Anderson's Study Abroad Choice Model (Figure 6).

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the first research question on study abroad choice. These findings include a statement of the problem and a summary of the survey and interview data. The findings of the research on study abroad choice are examined thematically using Anderson's Study Abroad Choice Model. A summary concludes the chapter.

Participant Demographics

In all, 24 undergraduate business students responded to the online survey. Of these 24 students, 18 were women and 5 were male (1 abstained from this question); 15 were white and 9 were non-white. All of the students were in at least their second year in college; 4 were second-year students, 18 were third-year students and 2 were fourth-year students. Students also reported their previous time abroad. The average total time spent abroad before their study abroad experience was three months. Four students reported zero previous time abroad, and six students said they had been abroad between two weeks and one month.

The participants also reported their parents' estimated annual income. Nine students reported their parents' income at over \$100,000; eight reported \$80,000-\$100,000; two reported \$60,000-\$80,000; one reported \$40,000-\$60,000; and four students reported parental income under \$40,000. Participants reported twelve different destination countries for their student abroad experience. These countries included: Spain, Italy, France, Austria, Germany, Hong Kong, Norway, Scotland, Belgium, Denmark, Czech Republic, and Singapore.

Summary of Survey Findings

In an open-ended survey question, students were asked to detail their decision-making processes for studying abroad, including when they first started thinking about study abroad. Of the 19 participants who answered this question, nine starting thinking about study abroad in their first year of college. Five of the participants reported first thinking about study abroad in high school, and three participants reported "always" thinking about studying abroad. The two other participants indicated that they first thought about study abroad sometime in college.

Participants were given a list of the important factors in deciding to study abroad based on the literature, and they were asked to pick as many as applied to them. Figure 4 on the following page shows the results of this survey question. "Location" as a factor was chosen by 95% of participants. "Having fun" and "new experience and cultures" both received 90.5% of responses. "Fulfilling degree requirements," "cost," and "language and other skill development" all received responses of 52.4%. "Good for resume" and "other" received 19% response rates respectively. Nineteen percent of

responses indicated “other” and of these, two students specifically designated travel as a factor in deciding to study abroad.

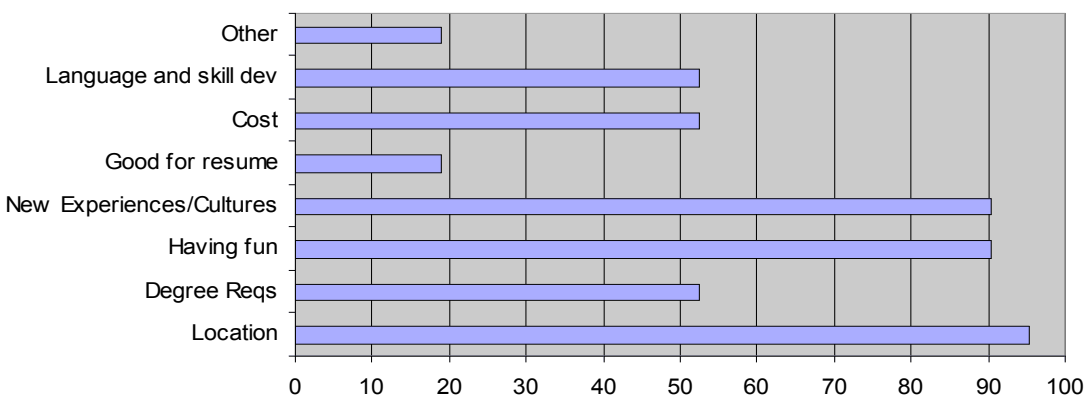


Figure 4. Factors for students’ decisions to study abroad

In addition, in the open-ended question that asked students to detail their decision-making process, students mentioned factors that motivated them to study abroad. Five respondents mentioned language acquisition as a reason to study abroad. Four participants talked about their previous travel as a factor that encouraged them to study abroad. Four participants also mentioned that their parents were an encouraging factor. Other factors mentioned by either one or two participants included: friend(s) who studied abroad, First-year Interest Group Program (FIG), requirement for their major, opportunity to travel, advisor, financial feasibility, the chance to do something different and the first-year business student group

Survey participants were also asked “Who encouraged you to study abroad?” They were given a list of options and were instructed to choose as many as applied. “Friends” had the most responses at 66.7%. Participants reported at a 58.3% rate that

university staff encouraged them to study abroad. The next most popular response was “parents” at 50.0%. The fourth most common response was “faculty” at 41.0%. “Other” was reported by 25.0% of participants. Of these “other” responses, six students detailed that they encouraged themselves to study abroad. Figure 5 below is a chart that represents these results. “Family other than parents” encouraged students to study abroad in 29.2% of participants while “high school teacher or counselor” was reported by 12.5% of participants.

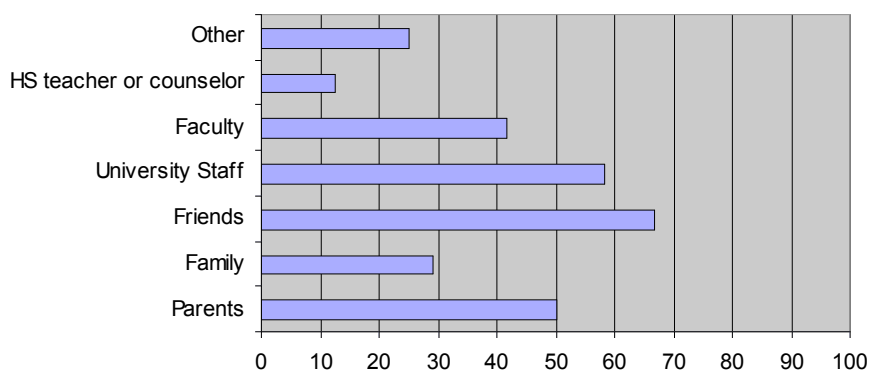


Figure 5. People who encouraged study abroad

Interview Summary

The interviews served to corroborate and add to the results of the surveys. Interviewees reported similar factors in their decision-making processes, including the same types of people who encouraged them to study abroad. The interviews provided detailed explanations of the process the students used and the factors that were important to them. The process map that each student drew to capture their individual decision-making process assisted the student and the researcher in clarifying the components of the decision and the interaction between components.

Anderson's Study Abroad Choice Model

The themes that emerged from the analysis of the survey data and interviews indicated that the proposed Study Abroad Choice Model accurately described the factors that influenced student decisions to study abroad in this research study. These factors fell into the main model categories of travel and location, institutional climate and characteristics, background, social environment, educational attainment, aspirations, language and skill development, cultural exposure, and financial variables (see Figure 6). The components of the model can be explained thematically by using the students' own words.

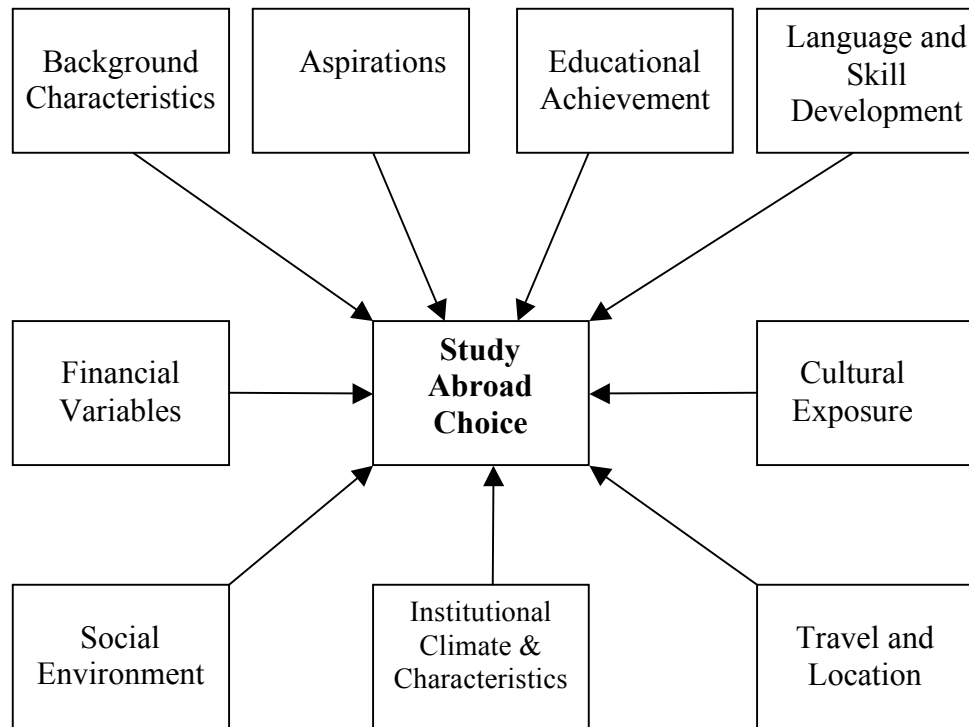


Figure. 6. Anderson’s Study Abroad Choice Model

Location and Opportunity to Travel

Location and travel were often the first factors cited by students as reasons to study abroad. First, students mentioned previous travel to other locations. Often this previous travel influenced students to return to the same country or conversely, to travel to a place they had never been to before. For example, one survey participant explained, “I thought about studying abroad after I spent a month in Mexico studying and living with a family. I wanted to go to another Spanish-speaking country though.” Another survey respondent detailed, “When I was a sophomore in high school I traveled with a school group to Australia and LOVED it so it made me realize I really wanted to travel.” A survey participant heading for Italy for the spring semester said, “When I was 16, I went to Italy and France and I knew I wanted to go back.” Vanessa mentioned that she

“had already been to London and Paris and decided that [she] did not want to study there.”

Another subcategory of location is what most students mentioned as “something different.” The factor driving them to study abroad was getting out of the U.S. in general and being able to be in a completely different location. Four participants reported that they had never been outside of the U.S., so broadening their experience via change in location was important. One survey participant said that he “wanted to get out of the country for a while,” and another mentioned wanting to see the scenery of new places and locations he only previously read about in books.

The majority of participants mentioned travel in general or specific terms. Interviewees detailed the excursions they were planning to other countries once they arrived at their host country. Some participants talked about thoroughly exploring their city and country of destination. As one survey respondent details, “I knew before coming to RSU that I planned to study abroad. International experiences in high school gave me an appreciation for other cultures, and I caught the ‘travel bug’.” Clearly, the travel experience was a motivating factor for these participants.

Institutional Climate and Characteristics

Both RSU’s institutional climate and characteristics influenced students to study abroad. Most noticeably, 58% of students cited university staff when asked on the survey, “Who encouraged you to study abroad?” Similarly, in the interviews, students were asked where they obtained information about study abroad. Most students mentioned the university in some way, specifically other students, advisors, and

professors. Students also mentioned the opportunity and administrative ease of studying abroad through the Commerce School.

In terms of university staff, six survey participants mentioned their “Advisor”, either academic advisor or study abroad advisor. Advisors communicated to students in a variety of ways. Emails from advisors were specifically mentioned twice as an information source. Four students cited printed materials in academic or study abroad offices as their main source of information. Most students said their interaction was one-on-one or in an information session. The interviews also revealed advisor interaction:

Sarah – “I didn’t know a thing about study abroad until FIG. Mark [study abroad advisor] came and did a presentation then I did some research myself.”

Chris – “I knew I wanted to go [abroad] but the advisors really helped me out a lot.”

Nicole – “I’m an IB [International Business] major and German minor so I talked to Mark [study abroad advisor] about Germany but Vienna seemed to be a better match so I picked Vienna.”

Terry – “I asked my academic advisor really early on about studying abroad and then went to an info session.”

Leslie – “I talked with my advisor about it but then I saw an email [from advisor] about the deadline and rushed to get my application in... Marcie [study abroad advisor] was my main source of information.”

David – “I first had a study abroad info session at my FIG and then I went to an actual session later. The advisors answered my questions – that was the most helpful.”

Ashley – “I got to know Marcie (study abroad advisor) my freshman year. I went to the Study Abroad Center too. I researched a lot before I applied.”

Ivan – “The BBA International advisor helped with planning and advice.”

Advisors from the partner schools abroad also assisted students, though their influence seemed to come after the students made the decision to study abroad and were accepted to their programs.

Leslie – “Mario, the advisor at Leonardo, was helpful after I was accepted.”

David – “Leonardo’s advisors were o.k. I’ve exchanged emails twice so far.”

Faculty members were also mentioned as motivators and sources of information for study abroad. Of the survey respondents, 41.7% reported that faculty members encouraged them to study abroad. In addition, three of ten participants interviewed mentioned that a professor informed them about study abroad.

Ashley – “Everyone has been supportive. Stacy Mars, my IB [International Business] teacher was very encouraging.”

Ivan – “I got encouragement from my professor who ended up writing my recommendation letter for me.”

Nicole – “My professor...helped me think through study abroad and encouraged me to do it.”

Other students, either students who had already studied abroad or students on an exchange program to RSU, were cited as an important information source. One survey respondent said, “My friend went to London for a semester and posted a daily blog, and it felt like I was there with him and it made me think more about it[study abroad].”

Interviewees reported similar stories:

Ashley – “I spoke to one person who had gone to Barcelona and she raved about Barcelona...I did a lot of research, including reading evaluations of students who have already gone abroad.”

Ivan – “My girlfriend studied abroad first and other friends too. They all said I had to go.”

Sarah – “My FIG mentor [who studied abroad] said it was easy to do.”

Other students, the international students on an exchange program at the Commerce School and RSU, were encouraging factors and important sources of information for many participants.

Leslie – “I tried to make friends with the Italians here...gave them rides to the airport, took them out on Sixth Street. It helped because they go to the school that I am going to [Leonardo].”

Terry – “The international students at Commerce helped me a lot.”

Another institutional characteristic discussed by participants was the ease and opportunity to study abroad at Commerce. As one survey participant said, “I started thinking about studying abroad as a freshman. The BBA exchange programs made it very easy for me to decide to study abroad.” Sarah mentioned that others in the business

school told her that study abroad was easy to do with an exchange program. Emma also explained, “Calendar-wise, it’s similar to the American schedule so it’s been easy to schedule...I am glad to be able to do a spring semester.” In her interview, Ashley described how the ease of arranging study abroad was an encouraging factor:

If I can maximize getting courses and being in another country that I really want to be in, why not? It’s not taking me any longer to graduate and the courses fit my degree plan...so there is no reason not to study abroad.

Background Characteristics

Student background characteristics influenced their decisions to study abroad. Notably, parents played a large role in the study abroad process. The level of influence and involvement of the parents varied among participants. Two students mentioned that their parents planned to visit them during their study abroad semester. Other parents did not want their students to travel abroad, but these students either had to convince their parents to allow them to go or make their own arrangements to allow their study abroad experience to take place. These parental influences were both approving and disapproving but nonetheless fueled their students’ desires to go abroad.

Among other family members, a few of the participants mentioned older siblings who previously studied abroad. These older siblings played a role in their younger siblings’ decisions to study abroad. Their role was two-fold. One, they paved the way with their parents for their younger siblings. The siblings’ study abroad experiences gave the family as a whole an exposure to the process and a set of lessons learned. Two,

they provided both encouragement and information for their younger siblings. As

Emma related:

My older sister studied abroad too, but in France. I really saw the positive nature of it. My parents were supportive but I think it was a lot easier to convince them since she had already gone. She took French and I took Spanish, so it makes sense that she went there and I am going to Spain. In a way, I think the fact that she studied abroad first let me know that I could really do it too.

Previous travel, either by parents or by the whole family, was discussed extensively. As one survey respondent explains, “My dad travels a lot for his job, and because of this I’ve wanted to travel as much as possible since I was little.” Interviewees reported other previous travel that led them to explore studying abroad while in college.

Chris – “Traveling with my family was important. We went on trips every year and I really enjoyed it. I knew I wanted to study abroad as soon as I knew it was an option.”

Emma – “I studied abroad in high school in Cuernavaca, Mexico and loved it...I also took a church trip to Cuba for three weeks.”

Leslie – “When I traveled to Italy, I fell in love with the culture and way of life so I knew I wanted to study abroad and go back to Italy.”

David – “When I was little, like in the fifth grade, we went to Switzerland. And then my junior year [in high school] we did a Europe tour: England, Germany, Italy. I knew I wanted to travel. I wanted to live in Italy for at least a couple months.”

Ashley – “My mom loves to travel. I feel fortunate to have traveled. We have gone to so many amazing places. In May ’05, I traveled to Spain with my parents and loved it. But I wasn’t completely sure Spain was where I wanted to go...My parents went to Australia and said I’d love it. They’d rather me go there because they feel Australia is safer than Europe.”

Ivan – “I spent a Christmas break from school in Europe but missed going to Norway, so I figured I should study there.”

Student background played a role in another way. A few participants also mentioned their “roots” or ethnic heritage when discussing their decision making process for study abroad. Sarah noted that “the number one reason I picked Germany was because of my family heritage.” Conversely, Chris mentioned that he did not want to go to Mexico specially because he is Mexican-American. He wanted to go somewhere completely new to him. Other ethnic preferences were based on language. A few students mentioned that they or their parents preferred that they study abroad in an English speaking country. Two interviewees characterized their thoughts on this issue:

Vanessa – “I really wanted to go to Australia in high school...my parents [wanted me to] too. My dad thought it would be safer and they speak English there so he felt better about me going there.”

Chris – “I first got the list of English speaking programs and then narrowed the list down to three places from there.”

Educational Attainment

Obtaining course credits to use towards a degree is the foundation of study abroad and a *de facto* goal of all the students in this study. Other students were motivated by their desire to specifically obtain the bachelor of business degree in International Business. For some students, getting credit was not addressed or was merely mentioned in passing. A little over half of all of the survey respondents noted that “degree requirements” were a factor in their decision to study abroad. One student explained that he was excited about taking “new and different coursework” while another participant mentioned that his exchange program had “good course options.” Still another student discussed “new patterns of learning” and the challenges that studying in another country could bring.

In the interviews, Vanessa stated that she was originally thinking of going on a different study abroad program but the desire to get business credits pushed her to utilize one of the Commerce programs instead. Chris said he chose Milan and the University of Leonardo not only for the finance coursework but also because of his interest in Roman history. Leslie, also heading to Milan, said that she wanted to take advantage of the Leonardo coursework to take electives and different coursework unavailable at RSU.

Other participants decided to study abroad in part because their major, International Business (IB), contained a study abroad requirement. Typically, students in the International Business major link a foreign language, a study abroad location, and twelve hours of coursework into a geographical theme. For example, Leslie took Italian language, studied abroad in Milan, and took European Studies coursework. One of the

survey respondents took Chinese and Asian Studies coursework, but was studying abroad in Australia because of its relationship within the geographical region.

Other students expressed their decision to study abroad in terms of their International Business major:

I have always wanted to study abroad. I was taking German classes and I wanted to go study in Germany. When I chose to be an IB major and saw that it was a requirement I knew I would be studying abroad. And the Commerce School goes to German-speaking countries so it was perfect.

Another survey respondent said, “I started thinking about going abroad as soon as I got accepted into the business school and into my major [International Business]. I had to go to Italy because that is the language and area I'm studying, but that was also my first choice.” In his interview, David also noted these requirements: “International Business has a study abroad component so I started taking Italian language classes early on.” Though many students thought about study abroad before declaring their major, the study abroad requirement served an academic motivation for those students who chose International Business as a major course of study.

Social Environment

Students' social environment influenced their decision to study abroad. These social factors included friends, student organizations, learning communities, and other students who studied abroad and exchange students attending UT Austin from other countries.

Friends

Many students in this study indicated that his/her peers were important to their decision making process to study abroad. When asked “Who encouraged you to study abroad?” nearly 70% of the survey participants chose “friends,” the single most popular answer. As one survey respondent explained:

I first decided when my friend showed me pictures of when she studied abroad in Italy. I've never been to Europe before but have been to Asia several times.

Then all my friends were accepted to study abroad programs and they got me all excited about it too.

First-Year Interest Groups

First-year Interest Groups, or FIGs, were cited by students as both introducing students to and informing them about study abroad. The FIG Program is designed to ease the transition from high school to college for first-year students. Over 3,000 undergraduates participated in 130 FIGs in fall 2006 at RSU. At summer orientation, students were placed into a cohort of 20 who enrolled in common courses together. Each FIG cohort meets once a week throughout the fall semester for a one hour seminar that is led by a student peer mentor and a staff facilitator. The seminars cover a variety of undergraduate transition issues, from academic to developmental to social.

Study abroad is one of the topics frequently covered by FIGs, particularly in the Commerce School. In fact, over the past three years, the Commerce School has had a study abroad themed FIG led by a peer mentor who has or will study abroad. Marcie, one of two study abroad advisors for business undergraduates, served as the FIG advisor.

FIGs were mentioned by both interviewees and survey respondents alike. As one survey participant said, “I learned about the possibility of studying abroad my freshman year when I joined a FIG that was geared towards showing students about study abroad.” Another survey respondent described how her FIG opened her eyes to the possibility of study abroad:

At first I thought, "Who in the world would study abroad?" You have to leave the comforts of home and your family and friends. How crazy is that? Then during my FIG, our advisor brought in someone to talk about study abroad and I started thinking more logically about it, instead of dismissing it altogether. I began to think how cool and amazing it would be.

Interviewees reported similar affects on their decision making:

Emma – “I was the FIG mentor assigned to Marcie [study abroad advisor]. Our FIG was specifically for students who wanted to explore study abroad. I wanted to study abroad before that but I learned so much more from being a FIG mentor.”

Sarah – “I knew absolutely nothing about study abroad before FIG. Carrie [academic advisor] brought Mark [study abroad advisor] to our FIG to do a study abroad session. I was so glad that I joined FIG...and found out about all of the great things that the business school has to offer.”

Student organizations

Another piece of the college student social environment involves co-curricular activities. There were over 900 registered student organizations at RSU and over 40 of

those organizations were affiliated with the Commerce School at the time of this study. Several of these student groups were specifically mentioned as providing information and motivation to study abroad. The student organizations mentioned by students were business specific; that is, the student groups were affiliated with the Commerce School and were designated for business students. Involvement in these groups is encouraged by Commerce academic advisors from the time students first step on campus at summer orientation. As the university's brochure indicates:

Involvement in the school's official organizations is integral to the Commerce educational experience. In extracurricular activities, students build skills in leadership, group facilitation, conflict management, and negotiation — all of which are instrumental to career success. With over 40 undergraduate student organizations in the Commerce School of Business, and more than 900 student organizations campus-wide, you'll have no problem finding one or two or more that match your professional and personal interests.

The specific student organizations mentioned by participants were Commerce Exchange Students (CES), Association of Students in Economics and Commerce (AIESC) and Commerce First-year Association (CFA). These organizations not only help to bond business students and create a common experience, but they are a source of information to new students. Business Students Abroad is a group for students interested in study abroad and those students who have already studied abroad. This organization allows for the exchange of information and advice. Emma explains, "I joined AIESC my freshman year. I knew I wanted to study abroad already but it was

nice to be around other students who wanted to study abroad too.” A survey respondent elaborated on their experience in CFA:

During the first few meetings of Freshman Business Association, guest speakers came to tell us of their experiences abroad, and they all had good experiences. I started researching where I would want to go, and the more I saw, the more I wanted to go. I am so glad that I was in CFA!

Student organizations, especially the groups targeting first-year students, provide critical peer contact and information on study abroad. Friends, FIGs and student organizations are all components of the larger social environment. The social environment of the students in this study was a factor in their decisions to study abroad.

Aspirations

Students in this study reflected on their decision to study abroad in terms of their general life aspirations and more specific career aspirations. As one survey respondent explained, “One of my life goals is to visit all seven continents so this is a way for me to make progress on that.”

Interestingly, all of the students who reported utilizing study abroad to assist in their career aspirations were male. Two students who were interviewed discussed how study abroad was recommended by recruiters and four of the survey participants noted that study abroad was good for their resume. One survey respondent was very specific about his intentions:

I would like to become fluent in Italian so that I can do business in Italy, and eventually call it my home. Additionally, I would like the opportunity to travel

in Europe and try to find other countries that I would be interested in doing business with.

Other respondents gave more general responses. One survey respondent reported that he was using study abroad to find career aspirations. He said, “I’m still unsure of my interests of what I want to do with my life...hopefully this trip will point me in the right direction.” Student aspirations reflected a desire to connect to the larger world around them.

Cultural Exposure

Travel as cultural exposure was detailed extensively by students. Travel was seen as a function of both location, as previously mentioned, and cultural exposure. Some students specifically mentioned the cultural exposure as a reason to study abroad while others were vaguer and discussed wanting to be exposed to “something different.” Similar to travel, students were often the most excited to discuss the possibilities of exposure to culture.

The interviews, in particular, revealed the desire for cultural exposure. Nearly all of the interviewees said they wanted to experience cultural differences or new experiences. Many students said they wanted to meet people from all over the world or from the large geographical regions they would be in. Ashley and James, two of the students who were interviewed together, talked about how cultural differences were a motivating factor in their decision to study abroad:

Ashley – “For me, the differences in culture...is one of the top reasons I want to study abroad. I really want to see other cultures and really live there and get to know what it’s like to live in Barcelona.”

James – “Yeah. I mean, I want to experience different cultures especially Norwegian but other European cultures too.”

Language and Skill Development

The Commerce School offers English-speaking study abroad exchange programs and programs that are conducted in the native language of the host institution. These two types of programs naturally demarcate the students into two groups, the ones who speak the language of the host country and those who do not. The programs that are in a native language require students to take four semesters of coursework in that language, at a minimum. Upper division coursework in the native language is preferred to maximize student academic success. Students who do not speak the native language take their coursework in English.

A variety of language issues were mentioned by participants. The main objective was to improve language skills in a language that the student had previously studied. However, some students did not know the language of their destination country, and their main goal was purely to be exposed to the language. For example, one survey respondent said, “I also didn't want to go somewhere that spoke English as its primary language because I wanted to experience something completely different. No, I do not speak any German, but I hope to pick up some.” Language skill development as a theme continued in the interviews.

Ashley – “I took Spanish in high school and wanted to speak the language better. I always wanted to go so I can utilize my Spanish and become more fluent.”

David – “I started taking Italian classes after I became IB [International Business major]. And the more classes I took, the more I saw the benefit of study abroad as more than fun. You can learn spoken language instead of from a book.”

Terry – “I took German at RCC [Respected Community College] and in high school before I came to Commerce. I really wanted a semester there [in Germany] to really practice and become fluent.”

Emma – “I’ve always taken Spanish. I think it will great to have to use it everyday.”

Nicole – “I took German in high school...I thinking improving my language and to continue learning is one of my main goals.”

Financial Variables

A large part of the study abroad decision making process for the participants involved researching of the costs and calculating the subsequent cost-benefit analysis associated with study abroad. Students mentioned several financial variables including exchange rates between the U.S. dollar and foreign currencies, banking fees, cost of living disparities, and travel costs. Students discussed their thoughts about the costs of study abroad with a wide range of comments:

Survey respondent – “Part of the reason I came to RSU was because I knew it would make it financially feasible to study abroad.”

Vanessa – “I found out that I could take courses pass/fail and use the State Aid Fund. That sealed the deal for me to go to Italy with the business school.”

Overall, participants in this study were concerned with finances. Some students were more emphatic about the financial worry of paying for part or all of their study abroad experiences themselves, while other students acknowledged the cost that their parents would incur. Students paying for some or all of their study abroad experience were more outspoken about finances than were the students who had financially supportive parents. Several students also noted that financial issues, while critical at the start of the study abroad decision making process, became less of an issue as the process moved forward and more information was obtained.

Discussion of Choice

To discuss the factors that went into the study abroad choice process, it is helpful to first look at the factors that were most heavily weighed by students then how to apply the study abroad choice model. In general, students were eager to talk about study abroad. They were surprisingly candid in discussing how they made decisions and the factors that were significant for them. Taken as a whole, student factors can be grouped in two main categories. On one hand, the students commented on their concerns and apprehensions and on the other, students detailed their hopes and anticipations.

Student Apprehensions

The students in this study were concerned about a variety of issues but the largest were financial and social environmental worries. Students were anxious about the costs involved with studying abroad. From the exchange rates to the cost of living differences, even students who had ample financial support from their parents or other sources were concerned about the cost. Many of the fears about cost were allayed due to the exchange program format. Exchange programs helped to defray the costs of study abroad by allowing students to pay tuition at their home university for the semester abroad. Foreign students en route to U.S. universities pay tuition at their home university. The two types of students exchange places, benefiting both the students and the universities as a whole. Nevertheless, financial issues and the costs associated with study abroad affected the process of students wanting to study abroad.

The other main apprehension reported by students during the decision-making process was related to social issues. Many students were worried that they would be lonely and not have a group of friends at the host university. Others noted that they would miss their friends and family back home; many were scared that they would feel isolated and left out of their normal social circles. Despite these concerns, the students in this study emphasized the hopes and anticipations of their experience.

Student Anticipations

Student anticipations, though more thoroughly examined in the next chapter, provide a critical component for the students' decision-making processes. Students were most vocal about the two main categories of travel and cultural exposure. The

opportunity to travel, both inside and outside of the host country, gave students a chance to dream and explore endless possibilities. Coupled with travel was the expectation of being exposed to cultures different from their own. These students were cognizant of their social environments and the desire to expand their social networks to include new places and people. Student expectations of study abroad were some of the richest discussions of the research study.

Application of the Anderson's Study Abroad Choice Model

Though the general categories of apprehensions and anticipations were helpful in looking at the broad picture of study abroad decision-making, the Study Abroad Choice Model provided a set of specific factors that influence students to study abroad. Utilizing the Somers et al. (2005) conceptual framework of college choice, coupled with additional components from previous study abroad research, a holistic model of study abroad choice was developed.

Each student interviewed provided their own model of study abroad choice. For example, Vanessa's individual model of study abroad was heavily skewed towards financial variables (See Figure 7). For her, finances were the primary driver for making study abroad decisions; therefore, the financial variables component was the largest. She had no interest in language development but wanted cultural exposure in another country, which is represented by the second largest component in the model. Vanessa also mentioned that she specifically wanted to earn business credits for her degree while she was abroad, a direct reference to educational attainment. Other components of Vanessa's model were comparable to Anderson's Model of Study Abroad Choice- social

environment, background, location and travel, institutional climate and characteristics, and aspirations- but they were not overly influential in her decision-making process.

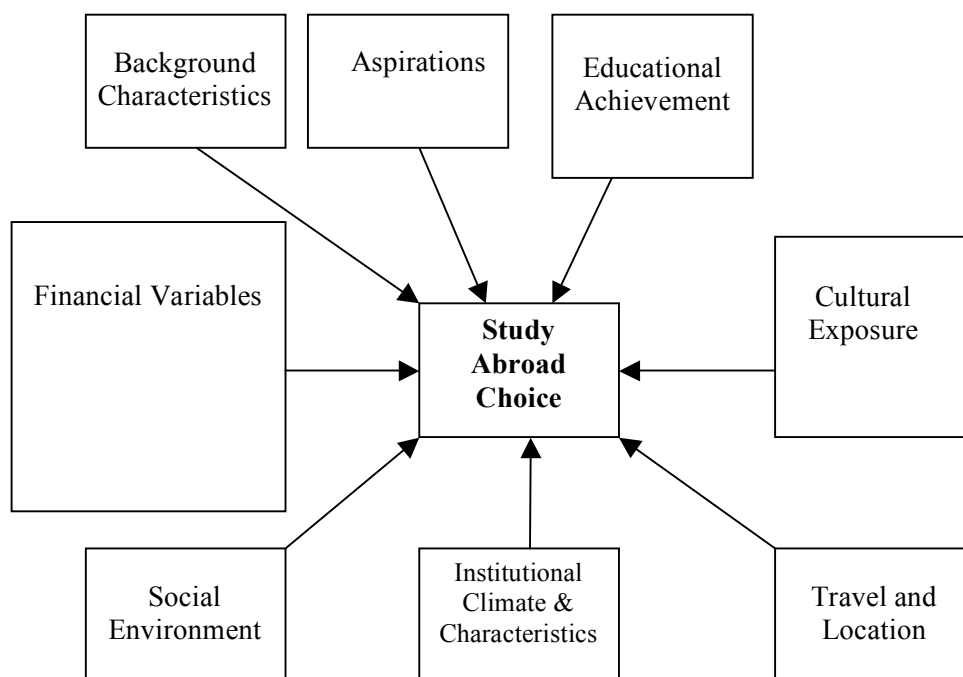


Figure 7. Anderson’s Model of Study Abroad, customized for participant Vanessa

Though every student relayed their own model of decision-making, the Anderson Study Abroad Choice Model acted as an overarching representation of student study abroad decision-making of study abroad decision making. Depending on the individual student, some components had an influence on other components in the model. For example, a student’s financial variables might influence their location and opportunity to travel. A student who has a limited budget might have to self-select out of attending certain study abroad programs in locations with a high cost of living. Another instance of one component influencing another component in the model concerns cultural

exposure, location, and language development. If a student chooses to gain cultural exposure in France but does not speak French, then Paris as a location may not be a realistic option for that student because the inability to communicate with others can impede true cultural understanding. The Anderson Model of Study Abroad Choice is a useful tool that captures the student decision-making process in general but allows for modification for individual student factors.

Summary

This chapter represents the findings of the first research question on study abroad decision-making. The Anderson Study Abroad Choice Model provides a comprehensive view of the factors that influence student decisions to study abroad. The next chapter presents the findings for the second research question on student expectations for study abroad.

CHAPTER FIVE: EXPECTATION FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter details the findings of the second research question that asks what expectations students have for study abroad. Survey and interview summaries are included as well as a thematic explanation of student expectations in the form of Anderson's Study Abroad Student Expectations Model. A discussion section concludes the chapter.

Summary of Survey Findings

In an open-ended survey question, participants were asked about their expectations for study abroad. Of the 20 participants who answered this question, two answers were mentioned the most. Both "travel to other places" and "meet new people" received 12 responses each. The next two most popular answers received nine responses each: "learn a language" and "learn or gain a better understanding of world cultures." "Having fun or a good time" received six responses and was the fifth most common answer. The desire to learn about themselves received five responses, and the expectation to have a "life-changing experience" received three responses. Four responses to the question "What are your expectations of study abroad?" received two responses each. These were: to gain a better understanding of and perspective on the United States, to earn course credits, gain an appreciation for others, and obtain life-direction.

Other responses given to the open-ended survey question, "What are your expectations for study abroad" were varied. The following responses were given only

once but reflected the diversity of study abroad expectations. These expectations were: “To challenge myself,” “Try new and different foods,” “Different teaching methods,” “Art and architecture,” “Do well in classes,” “I’m scared and nervous,” “It will be difficult at times,” and “I hope to break out of my shyness.” One participant reported not having any expectations at all.

Interview Summary

The interviews followed a similar pattern. The single most common expectation in the interviews was travel, followed by cultural exposure. Seeing things differently and living differently were also mentioned, as was language acquisition. Having fun and meeting people were also expectations specifically noted by students. Others nominally mentioned were housing issues, financial issues, and academic issues. The interviews provided ample support for student expectations as contained in Anderson’s Study Abroad Expectation Model (see Figure 8).

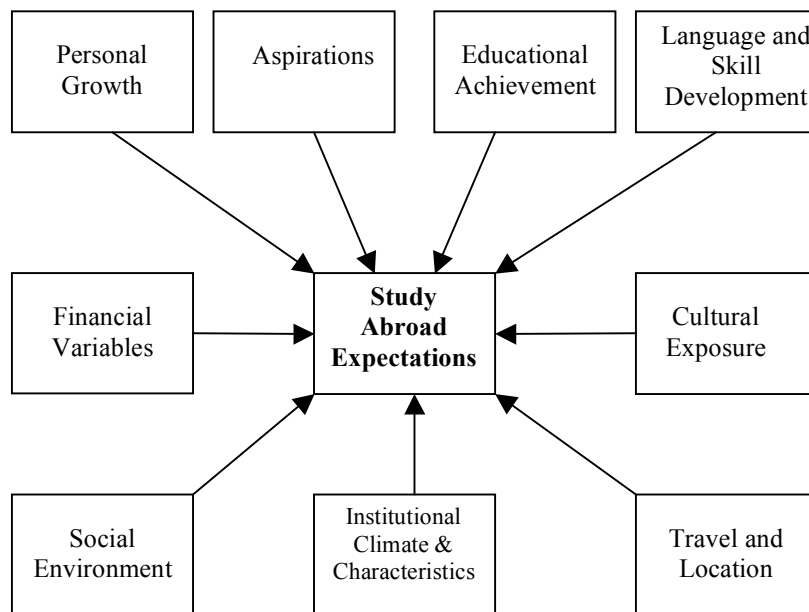


Figure 8. Student Abroad Expectation Model

Anderson's Study Abroad Expectation Model

Student decision making processes for study abroad are intertwined with and even mirror expectations for study abroad. The Anderson Study Abroad Choice Model, when slightly modified, can demonstrate these expectations in a modified Study Abroad Expectation Model. The components of the Study Abroad Student Expectations Model are location and travel, educational attainment, social environment, institutional climate and characteristics, personal growth, financial variables, aspirations, cultural exposure and language development.

Travel and Location

Half of all of the survey respondents said travel was a part of their study abroad expectation as did a majority of the interviewees. The students were excited to talk of

their upcoming plans; travel was often the first topic that students mentioned when asked about their expectations for study abroad. They discussed traveling alone, with other students in their programs, and with family members. As a survey participant explained, “I expect to get to travel and see places that I would never get to see otherwise.” Another reported, “I also would like to travel often to mainland China, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, and Japan.”

The student interviews provided rich and detailed travel plans and the reasons for choosing certain travel destinations:

Ivan – “I really want to travel around and visit my friends on the other study abroad programs.”

David – “I hope to have time to travel a lot while I’m there. I have a friend in Prague that I want to visit, and my dad and I are going skiing in France during our break.”

Terry – “I want to see Switzerland but I also want to visit other countries especially Germany since I’m taking German. There is so much to see in such a relatively small area, so I expect to travel quite a bit.”

Emma – “I want to explore Spain. I am planning on Madrid, Valencia and I would love see to Ibiza. But there are so many places I want to go...I don’t even know where I might end up going.”

Nicole – “Since I initially wanted to go to Koblenz [Germany] instead of Austria, I hope to travel there to compare it. I should be able to travel a lot from

Austria...to other places around Europe. I haven't been to Europe before so anywhere I get to go will be new to me."

Chris – "Traveling around Italy will be great...I've never been to Italy. I want to hit all the main Roman sites and all the major cities too. Venice, Rome, Florence, Naples...I really want to get to know Italy.

Travel is an important expectation for the participants in this study. Students were excited to report their plan about where they were going to travel and why they chose the places they wanted to see. Again, peers and family were often important to their travel plans. Whether it was traveling to the country next door to meet with their friend on a different study abroad program or traveling to go skiing with their dad, the participants expected a good amount of travel while abroad.

Students also expressed expectations concerning the location of their study abroad experience. Many students said they expected a more historical environment than the U.S., through a country's architecture and general infrastructure. Others, often traveling to Asian countries, reported expectations of a faster paced and more technologically advanced environment.

Educational Attainment

Most students acknowledged that they were studying abroad to obtain course credits and some did mention wanting to be challenged by new coursework. But more students elaborated on the fact that they were not placing as much emphasis on classes compared to the general experience of study abroad. A few students reported that they expected courses abroad to be easier to allow them to travel and take advantage of the

cultural experience. As exemplified by one survey respondent, he said, “I also want to do well in my classes, but I am placing more importance on my experience outside of class than inside.” The interviewees echoed this sentiment:

David – “I am not worrying about classes...I know I can do well enough...it’s more about being there.”

Leslie – “School is kind of on the backside...I want to take advantage of their courses but the experience is the main thing.”

Still other students reported wanting to excel in coursework and expecting to be challenged. Terry, who studied in Vienna, planned on registering for classes that were not available at Commerce. He explained:

I want to get classes that they don’t offer here [at Commerce]. The classes look really cool but I want to get something out of them too. I think I will have plenty of time to travel otherwise...I expect the classes to deliver.

Social Environment

Meeting new people, along with travel, were the expectations given most often by survey respondents. As two representative survey respondents illustrated, most students specifically mentioned wanting to meet people from other cultures.

Survey respondent – “I expect to have a lot of fun and meet a lot of new people. I really want to get to know locals (I’m planning on joining an organization other than the one for international students).”

Survey respondent – “Primarily, I hope to enjoy myself by meeting as many people as possible, preferably more Hong Kong students than other study abroad students.”

The interview participants also elaborated on wanting to make new acquaintances:

Sarah – “I really want to make some good friends. I am worried about not knowing anyone but there should be a good group of exchange students there so I’m sure it’ll be fine...it will be great to meet Norwegians too.”

Emma – “I am not sure about how the students are going to be there...I guess it will be mostly like RSU...but with more Spaniards...I hope I make some friends outside of American students.”

Two students interviewed even mentioned romantic expectations. Leslie explained that she wanted to have an “international romance” as a part of her study abroad experience and she expected to spend more time out socializing than anything else. Vanessa, another interviewee, talked about the “possibility of meeting someone special” while on her program. Both women seemed eager to have a romantic adventure as a part of their study abroad experience.

Financial Variables

Students as a whole expected study abroad to cost as much as a semester at RSU or to be much more expensive. Students studying in locations with a lower cost of living said that the travel they planned on doing would balance out that savings. Interviews with students revealed varying financial issues.

Emma – “My parents are more concerned with finances. I know it will be expensive so I am going to try to keep things reasonable. But I still am going to travel extensively...I will just have to watch it.”

Chris – “This trip will be expensive. The cost of living alone makes it more expensive. It’s Italy. I hope the dollar goes up!”

Sarah – “I am really going to have to budget...and balance traveling with my budget. I know I will have to say no to some things and not eat out as much.”

Again, the students who had parents willing to finance their study abroad semester did not mention financial issues. A couple of students said that their parents were putting them on a budget and encouraged them to spend wisely. Conversely, students paying for part or all of their study abroad experience were very vocal about the need to budget and minimize costs.

Personal Growth

Another expectation expressed by a majority of survey respondents and interview participants was personal growth. Students said they had this expectation for themselves but were also informed by others to expect to grow from the experience. This was expressed in a variety of ways from social development to emotional development. The survey respondents reported on these expectations of growth:

Survey respondent – “I hope to have a ‘life changing experience’. Everyone tells me it will be amazing, so I just hope it can live up to the hype.”

Survey respondent – “I expect be more independent and learn something new about myself!”

Survey respondent – “I want to learn more about myself and what makes me happy.”

Survey respondent – “I also tend to be a little on the shy side so I think this will help me break out of that a little bit since I will be the only student from RSU going and I don't know anyone else going.”

Survey respondent – “I expect my time abroad to be difficult at times, fulfilling, challenging, and filled with memories, lessons, and a sense of newness and fulfillment.”

The interviews provided even more evidence about the expectation of personal growth:

Leslie- “I want to get adjusted quickly...I don’t want to be a hermit or feel isolated. I want to be a part of the community in some way. It will be a challenge but nothing too bad. It will help me down the road...having to come to a new place and make friends without really knowing anyone.”

Ashley- “I expect to be self-sufficient. It may be a little scary or hard at first though...but I can’t see not becoming more grown up.”

Terry- “I think it will be frustrating at first. You know, there’s culture shock and other things...adjusting...even to the weather, being in the Alps...but I will work through it and it will all be worth it. I expect to come back a much different person than when I left.”

Many students felt that study abroad would make them more mature and assertive in their everyday lives. In addition to the personal growth expectations related to study abroad, students also expressed expectations for career development.

Aspirations

Though the majority of the aspirations related to personal growth and language acquisition, there were students who studied abroad with the anticipation of enhancing their career prospects. Two students mentioned that they wanted to pursue a life abroad and study abroad would give them both an insight and a jump start for international living. Several said they were interested in working in an international company, so a study abroad experience on their resume could assist in that endeavor.

Cultural Exposure

Students expected to be exposed to culture as a part of their study abroad program. Other than travel, the desire for cultural exposure was the most talked about topic in the interviews. As one survey respondent explained, “I expect to get to experience the Italian culture in a way that simply visiting would not allow.” For the students in this study, cultural exposure meant trying out new foods, meeting people from different cultures, living in and exploring a foreign place, and for some, trying out the native language. Many students put this expectation in very general terms like “I want to experience culture.” For example, in her interview, Vanessa remarked, “I am very interested in learning about the culture. I want to see things differently.”

Language Skill Development

Students expressed a wide variety of expectations for language acquisition depending on their current skill level. Some students merely wanted to hear the native language spoken. In the English-speaking countries, students expected to encounter accents and even differing dialects.

Other students expected to raise the level of their language proficiency and even become fluent in the native language. One survey participant reported, “My biggest expectation is that I will come home with the ability to comfortably speak Italian.” Another survey participant said, “It would be great if I was able to improve the little Chinese I know as well.” The interviewees weighed in on their expectations for their language development:

Ashley – “I expect to be able to speak Spanish and get around with it...I think it should improve, even if I’m just hearing it a lot more.”

Terry – “I expect to be challenged by the language but it’s the only way to become truly fluent.”

Sarah – “I am concerned that English is not the first language. But I think enough people will know English so I’ll be o.k. I would like to be able to speak enough to order in a restaurant or go to a store and things like that...just to be able to get around.”

Students reported varying expectations for language development. This variance in expectation was due to differences in the individual exchange programs and the individual proficiency levels of the student.

Discussion of Expectations

Student expectations of study abroad are as varied as the factors that go into the study abroad decision-making process. With little literature available on student expectations of study abroad, the results from this research on study abroad expectation can be bolstered by the related choice literature. By using certain factors to make decisions about study abroad, students are placing expectations on the factors themselves. These factors with their assumed expectations mirror Anderson's Study Abroad Choice Model. For example, if a student chooses to study abroad in Spain to improve her Spanish language skills, then it can be inferred that one of her expectations is language and skill development. Most of the expectations that students gave in this study were a direct reflection of the factors that influenced them to choose study abroad in the first place. The tie between choice and expectation was inexorable.

Summary

The factors that influence students to participate in a study abroad are directly linked to their expectations for the study abroad experience. These factors include location and opportunity to travel, background characteristics and opportunity for personal growth, educational attainment, aspirations, institutional climate and characteristics, financial variables, language skill development, social environment, and cultural exposure. The following chapter addresses findings for the third research question on the study abroad experience.

CHAPTER SIX: EXPERIENCE FINDINGS

Overview

As the previous chapters describe the findings of the first two research questions, this chapter details the findings of the third research question: What were the students' experiences while abroad? The seventh chapter to follow provides a summary of the study.

Summary of Survey Findings

The third research question examined student experiences during their study abroad semester. First, survey respondents reported overall satisfaction with study abroad. Participants were asked how satisfied they were with their study abroad experiences using a Likert-type scale of one to seven, with one being extremely dissatisfied and seven being extremely satisfied. All participants reported at least a 5.0 in satisfaction with an average of 6.52 for the 25 responses. When asked how their study abroad experiences matched their expectations, the majority (69.2%) responded that their experience “somewhat” matched their expectations. Next, 23.1% reported that their experience “matched exactly” their expectations for study abroad. Two students, or 7.7%, reported that their experience “did not at all match” their expectations. When asked if they would change the choices they made to study abroad, 84.6% of participants said they would not change the choices and conversely, 15.4% or four participants, said they would change their study abroad choices (see Figure 9 on the following page).

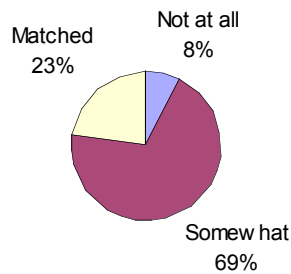


Figure 9. Students' Matches or Mismatches of Expectations

When asked if they would change their choices about study abroad, the large majority of survey participants said no (85%). Only 15% of students said they would change the choices they made about study abroad. The few survey respondents who would change their decisions noted that they would change the location of their program in some way. Two students wanted to change locations altogether and one student wanted to stay with a family instead of other exchange students.

Interview Summary

The interview data related to experience gave rich, detailed description of student experience in another country. The interviews served to corroborate and add to the findings of the survey. Interviewees reported a variety of experiences but larger, shared themes were evident. The interviews provided a depth and breadth of experiences that can be explained utilizing a Model of Study Abroad Experience, taken from Terenzini and Reason's (2005) college experience model. The college experience model, with two minor adjustments, can be considered a model of study abroad experience.

Model of Study Abroad Experience

The experience of the participants can be explained by utilizing the college experience model of Terenzini and Reason (2005). This model of study abroad experience verifies the five main components of Terenzini and Reason's model: student characteristics and experiences, organizational context, peer environment, individual student experiences, and outcomes (see Figure 10).

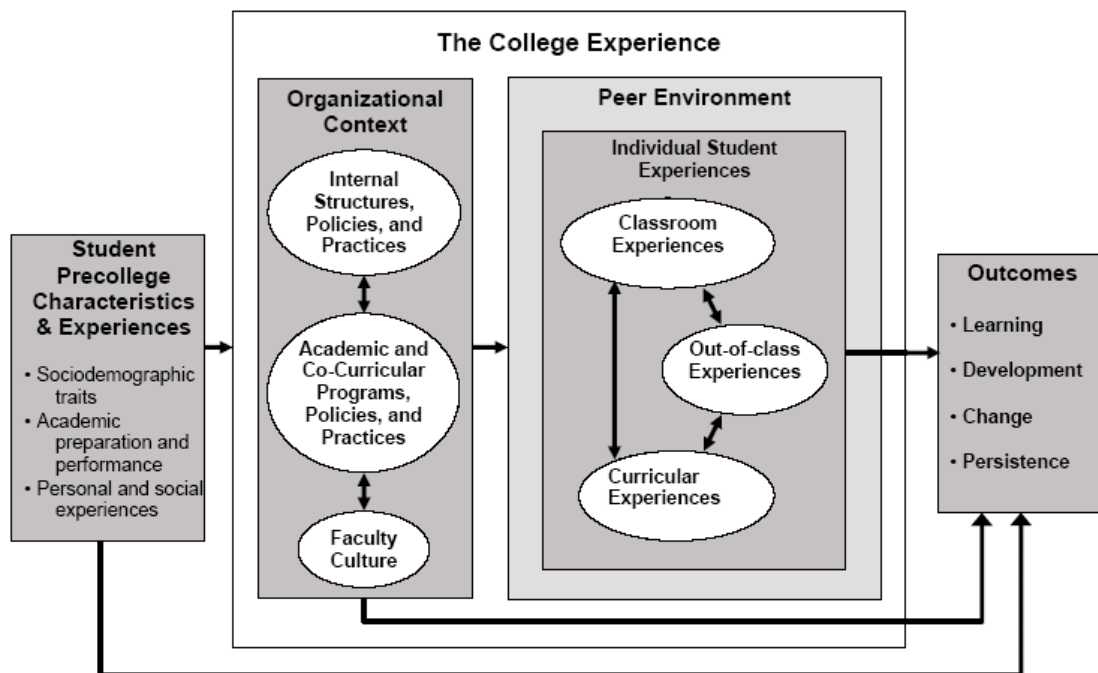


Figure 10. Model of study abroad experience, using Terenzini and Reason's (2005) college experience model

Student Characteristics

First, student characteristics and experiences in Terenzini and Reason's (2005) model influences student experience in college. Pre-college characteristics and

experiences are important, but so are the students' college experiences to date. Both student background and their college experience combine to have an effect on their time abroad. Student characteristics and experiences influence the rest of the model.

Students in this study noted that their background shaped their study abroad experiences in some way. These background qualities were also reflected in their decision-making process and are noted as a component in the Anderson Study Abroad Choice Model. Previous travel, parent and family travel, siblings who studied abroad, financial circumstances, and other background qualities integrate to form student characteristics and experiences. These characteristics and experiences set the stage for the student's time abroad.

Organizational Context

The next piece of the college experience model, organizational context, is just as Terenzini and Reason (2005) describe except that there are two contexts that the students must navigate. The organizational context of their home university with its policies, practices and cultures is one area to consider, as well as the parallel organizational context of the host institution with its own policies, practices and cultures. Like a Venn diagram, these contexts have an overlapping interaction that can be particularly important for the students studying abroad.

Some students reported having issues with the organizational context of their host institution. Most students did not mention organizational context. But if they did bring up an organizational issue, the feedback was mostly negative. For example, a survey participant noted, "The structure and bureaucracy have been hard to deal with at

times. There is so much to figure out...it's not like Commerce at all." Another student said, "The administration is unorganized...I don't feel like the host school has made an effort to help us...I have felt lost." There was some mention of the difficulty navigating the host school in the interviews as well. Rick, studying in Barcelona said:

The Spanish siesta makes things hard...The school administration just shuts down...it's inconvenient...it's also a lot smaller than RSU...like three main buildings! I don't know how anyone gets things done here. You have to take into account that things take longer here.

There was only one negative mention of organizational context in relation to the Commerce School. One survey participant said, "I expected more help from Commerce." Everyone else was satisfied with the assistance and preparation they received from the business school or at the least, they did not state any complaints.

Peer Environment

The third piece of the college experience model, peer environment, is also part of the Study Abroad Experience model. The peer environment sets the stage for the other occurrences of the study abroad program. Students mentioned that there was the peer environment of the host university to consider but they were also able to stay involved with the peer environment at home. With the technology of Instant Messenger and similar software programs that allow live chat back and forth between people anywhere in the world, students were not cut off completely from home. Cell phones, text messaging, and other advances kept students partially involved with their home environment.

Students mentioned missing home but loving their experience nonetheless. As one survey respondent said, “I expected to make friends, and I did, but not any close ones. I miss my friends and family back home.” One interviewee confided that she wished she were not in a relationship with someone back home. “It’s draining,” she said. “I can’t really relax because I am always checking in. I love being here but it’s hard to try and do a good job of being a girlfriend.”

Generally, the student peer environment at the host institution was reported as a positive atmosphere. Statements from the surveys provided examples of the peer environment. Three respondent quotes included, “The people have been better than I anticipated,” “I have met people from all over the world,” and “I have met great, outstanding people.”

The interviews also revealed a positive peer environment. Kristen said in her interview, “Norway has been great so far but it’s the people that have made the experience worthwhile...The lifelong friends I have made and the social atmosphere have all contributed to making my study abroad experience so great.” Jessica summed up her experience, “I will miss the people the most.”

The biggest issue that students had with the peer environment was the mismatch in expectation of peer group. Many students desired to have native students around to interact with. This was not always the case, though many students said they met other students that made up for this mismatch. As one survey respondent related, “The exchange students pretty much stick together...I thought I would meet more Czechs.”

Similarly, another survey respondent mentioned, “I am meeting a lot of new people but I hoped to meet more locals.”

The interviewees also expressed some frustration with the peer environment. Even though most of the students were happy with their social group, they wished they knew more students from the host country.

Rick – “I thought we would meet more Spaniards but it’s still been fun to meet everyone else. It’s a lot of American students here studying too.”

Vanessa – “I thought I would be hanging out with a lot more Italians.”

Emma – “I can’t believe I live and have bonded with Belgians. I never would have predicted that! I thought I would be bonding with all the Spanish students.”

The peer environment in a study abroad exchange program is an interesting mix of people. Students expected to meet more native students and people but instead met students from other countries and even students from other American universities. Though students reported this somewhat negatively at first, they appreciated the diversity and newness of meeting various people. Students detailed the peer environment but also other components of their experience.

Individual Student Experiences

The fourth piece of the college student model that takes place within the Peer Environment is categorized as individual student experiences. Like Terenzini and Reason’s (2005) model, these individual student experiences fell into three main

categories of classroom experiences, out-of-class experiences, and curricular experiences.

Curricular Experiences

Curricular experiences, according to Terenzini and Reason (2005), are those academic activities in general academic courses, in the student's major courses and other prescribed academics. These experiences varied for students but were concentrated mostly in business courses. The host universities were partnered with the Commerce School because they offered top business curriculum. Some students in the study said they appreciated that they could take classes that were not normally offered at Commerce. A couple of students were happy to take courses in a different country in general and were pleased to be challenged by new curriculum. Most of the students specifically mentioned their experiences in the foreign classroom.

Classroom Experiences

Terenzini and Reason (2005) stated that classroom experiences "include (but are not limited to) the kinds of pedagogies to which students are exposed...the nature and frequency of the feedback they receive from faculty members, and their instructors' pedagogical skills" (p. 12). Students reported a variety of these classroom experiences. Their experiences reflected mostly a mismatch of academic expectations. These mismatches were viewed by participants as both positive and negative.

The positive comments were given by students who found the academics less rigorous than RSU or by students who felt the pedagogical differences were superior to RSU. The students who experienced an easier curriculum were able to take advantage

of activities that they valued such as additional travel or time with friends. As one survey respondent explained, “I don’t have to spend as much time on classes as at RSU. I have been able to travel more which has been really nice.” Another survey participant said, “I thought school would be harder. We only have one big test at the end of the semester...It’s pretty sweet.”

The students who reported pedagogical differences were impressed by what they felt was more practical, meaningful learning at the host institution. In particular, students at Universita de Negocios in Barcelona talked at length about the “real life” learning that was taking place in their classrooms.

Rick – “The classes are all practical learning...better than UT...I’ve learned so much in a short amount of time.”

Emma – “The whole class is group work just like a business would be. It has been so much better than I thought, and I have learned so much.”

Students who reported negative classroom experiences felt that classes were more difficult than expected, therefore taking more of their time and energy to do well. A couple of students thought that the teaching itself was not as good as at Commerce. For example, three survey participants chimed in on their classroom experience, “The classes were much more disorganized than I thought they would be,” “I didn’t expect the classes to be so hard,” and “The teaching at this school is sub par.”

Out-of-Class Experiences

Students in this study reported many more out-of-class experiences than either curricular or classroom experiences. These experiences were varied, with issues ranging

from housing to travel to finances. The varying out-of-class experiences were detailed by these six survey respondents:

“Acclimating to the Italian lifestyle was difficult. Everything was slower and later than I was used to. I am still not completely used to it.”

“I didn’t expect to live in an apartment. I haven’t ever lived in an apartment before.”

“I thought the town would be quaint and cute but it is dirtier and more vulgar than I imagined.”

“I am spending way more money than I imagined...it is way more expensive than I thought it would be.”

“I have been able to see places from books I read growing up...seeing places I have always wanted to see.”

“I have seen and experienced a culture different from my own.”

The interviews also detailed a wide variety of study abroad out-of-class experiences:

Emma – “Travel has been great...I have seen so much of Spain already. And the people have been great. I have been using my Spanish a lot and trying to live the life.”

Olivia – “I have had issues with the bank and finances here. It’s been hard to deal with...plus it’s just expensive.”

Kristen – “Only choose Norway if you have a lot of money because everything is literally three times more expensive than America...The Norwegian people are very fashionable so I have had to buy new clothes...and because it’s cold.”

Jessica – “I miss certain foods and certain products but you can mostly find what you need...it’s hard to explain the food to others.”

Becca – “The traveling has been expensive but we’ve looked for cheaper alternatives like hostels. It was kind of fun having to stay in one big room with bunk beds...and we saved some money.”

Out-of-class experiences were the largest category but also the most complex and varied. These individual student experiences, as a part of the larger peer environment, often resulted in student outcomes.

Outcomes

The final piece of the college student experience model, outcomes, is typified by learning, development, change, and persistence. The student participants gave a wide variety of outcomes resulting from their study abroad experience. This study found the majority of outcomes could be categorized as learning and development, while change and persistence were only noted anecdotally.

Learning

A myriad of learning outcomes were reported by the students. One survey participant said, “I’ve learned a lot about different people/cultures and myself and how others see me. It’s a huge reality check, and I learn about what other people think of

America, and my mind is a lot more open now than it was before.” The interviewees also reported learning outcomes.

Becca – “I feel like every minute I am learning something new...it’s been a wonderful learning experience.”

Emma – “I have learned so much about other people and countries, especially Europeans and other North American students.”

The participants discussed learning a variety of topics, mostly culture, language and politics. The students also made discoveries about themselves.

Personal Development

Not only did the students report that they learned about culture and language, they reported personal development as a result of their study abroad experience.

Personal development consisted of emotional maturation and improving basic living skills. As one survey participant said, “I have come out of my box. I am less shy, more social, and more independent. I have made good friends that I feel I will keep in touch with after it is over.” Another student responding to the survey related, “I feel more mature, exposed to a more diverse group of intelligent people, enjoying my major more, feeling independent and confident.” The interviewees expressed additional personal developmental outcomes.

Becca – “I have gained a strong sense of independence...I am really getting to know myself more.”

Maggie – “Get ready to grow up fast and have the time of your life doing it!”

Emma – “It was scary to look for housing. It was easier to live with other RSU students but I was looking for a different experience. I had to go look at some scary places but I ended up finding a good place and my roommate is Canadian. It was an eye-opening experience.”

Jessica – “I am cooking for myself more. The Spanish schedule can be inconvenient when things are closed, like Sundays, so I decided to just be prepared on Sundays and make my own dinners... You can get used to anything.”

Rick – “Service here is different...you have to ask for your bill [at restaurants] and stuff...but in a way it’s good. You have to be more assertive and let people know what you want and it’s not just assumed.”

The personal development experienced by the study abroad students covered a myriad of topics from emotional maturation to practical living skills. The outcomes reported by the participants were wide ranging but nonetheless centered on learning and development.

Discussion of Experiences

Taken together, student experiences were diverse. Students discussed their living situations, host universities, classes, transportation, food, relationships, travel, and how they felt about their study abroad experience as a whole. Importantly, these experiences largely reflected the students’ expectations.

The study abroad experience model can be personalized for any student. For example, Emma’s background included a lot of travel and she was academically

prepared to study in Spain and speak the language. She had enough money saved to do some modest traveling while abroad. Emma had little issue with the organizational context of the university in Spain so this piece was as a smaller component of her model. Emma's experience was reflected largely in the peer environment. She enjoyed her living situation and was pleased with the people she met and considered her friends. Emma also appreciated her classroom experiences and the practical nature of the assignments in her business courses. The out-of-class experience was "phenomenal," allowing her to get to know Barcelona well and travel around Spain. These experiences improved her Spanish, made her more independent, and motivated her to travel even more.

Using the model to connect the dots of study abroad experience can help a student articulate the learning and development that takes place. The model can take the complex experiences of an entire semester in a foreign country and distill them down to meaningful components. Students, parents, administrators, and advisors can look to the model for guidance in explaining the study abroad experience.

Summary

The study abroad experiences of these students were overwhelmingly positive. The Terenzini and Reason (2005) college experience model can be used to explain the study abroad experience of students in this study. Three models were developed from the student responses to questions about their decision-making, expectation and experience of study abroad. The Anderson Study Abroad Choice Model, the Study Abroad Expectation Model and the Study Abroad Experience Model all attempt to

capture the factors that go into each phase of the study abroad process for undergraduates. The implications of the study will be discussed in Chapter seven.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the research questions and to revisit relevant literature. The implications of the research are discussed as well as suggestions for future research.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What factors influence students' decision to study abroad?
2. What are the students' academic, social, and personal expectations for studying abroad?
3. What were the students' experiences while abroad?
4. What implications do these findings have for the future of study abroad and higher education in American society?

Revisiting the Choice Literature

In reexamining the literature on study abroad choice and experience to date, this study echoes most of the previous research while providing a qualitative advancement to the findings. Carlson et al. (1990) found that students decided to study abroad largely for cultural exposure and language development. Second, students choose to study abroad to improve career prospects. The academic experience held a smaller, more moderate significance. The Carlson mixed methods study was a significant benchmark; however, new research was needed to corroborate its findings in college students today.

Nearly all the students in the current study reported seeking cultural exposure and the desire to travel to study abroad locations, but having a fun experience was just as, or even more important. Over half of the participants reported that language skill development, cost, and degree requirements were factors in deciding to study abroad. Improving career prospects was a goal to a much lesser extent.

Studies published since the turn of the century have all been quantitative. Chieffo (2000) found that study abroad factors of participation fell into five main categories: 1) financial, 2) social, 3) academic, 4) personal, and 5) institutional. Her study also reported a lack of faculty influence and conversely, student reliance on peers for information about study abroad. On the whole, students in Chieffo's study were uninformed about study abroad and the programs available to them.

This study also uncovered Chieffo's themes of participation through the Study Abroad Choice Model and provides a more detailed picture of study abroad determinants. Peers were a factor in deciding to study abroad but faculty were mentioned by forty percent of students in the present study when asked, "Who encouraged you to study abroad?" The participants seemed to be fairly well-informed about study abroad possibilities as they explained their decision-making processes.

In a second study abroad choice study by Booker (2001), students were motivated to study abroad by cultural immersion, academic relationships, direction of friends and family and ability to afford the program. Overall, the study abroad applicants in Booker's study perceived the university as supportive of study abroad.

The results of the Booker study are largely echoed by this study; students indicated a desire for cultural immersion and the importance of friends and family in the study abroad process. Further, the overwhelming majority of participants said that they were encouraged to study abroad by university staff, faculty or a first-year program or organization.

In 2003, a study by Peterson concentrated on developing effective communication strategies for study abroad administrators. Her study showed that financial information is needed most for students to make the decision to study abroad. Second, students need to be informed of the benefits and rewards of study abroad.

While financial concerns were mentioned by participants in this study and some of the students noted that an exchange program made studying abroad easier, the expected benefits reported by the students outweighed the financial concerns. Students were keenly aware of the financial considerations of study abroad as well as issues such as cultural adjustment.

Revisiting Foreign Student Experience

Studies on foreign student experience report dissimilar and often conflicting models of experience and adjustment. Previous research on foreign student experience has revealed a U-curve of adjustment, a reverse U-curve, a linear increase and no change at all. Preceding studies were unable to corroborate an overarching trend in foreign student adjustment.

This study was no different; students reported a wide variety of adjustment patterns. Many students mentioned that they expected to experience some form of

culture shock, as first reported by Klineberg and Hull (1979). Several participants said they did experience culture shock and a few expected to have reserve culture shock when they returned home.

Revisiting the Research Questions

The research questions in this study address the study abroad process. The first research question asked what factors go into student decision-making for study abroad while the second research question explored student expectations for study abroad. The third research question explored student experiences while abroad.

Study Abroad Choice

Study abroad choice is a multifaceted process. The Anderson Study Abroad Choice Model, based on the Somers et al. (2005) college choice model and select study abroad choice literature, identifies factors that influence student decision-making. These factors fall into the categories of travel and location, institutional climate and characteristics, background, social environment, educational attainment, aspirations, language and skill development, cultural exposure, and financial variables.

Travel and Location

Students were influenced to study abroad by the locations of the exchange schools. The exchange schools, in strategic partnerships with the Commerce School, reflect the destinations that are most popular with American students. These programs are in countries such as Spain, Italy, France, and Australia. For students who want to attend an exchange program in a more unique destination, there are programs in Norway, Chile or Thailand. Further, students decided to study abroad because the study

abroad locations allowed additional travel experience. Travel was emphasized over and over again at all stages of the study abroad process.

Institutional Climate and Characteristics

First, the culture and characteristics of the Commerce School seem to promote study abroad. The largest components of this culture, as reported by the students in this study, were the people and the programs. Nearly 60% of survey participants said university staff members were encouraging factors and just over 40% percent said faculty encouraged them to study abroad. Students need the face-to-face interaction for both information and reassurance, even though they access the internet and other sources to conduct their research.

Just as people were important in the study abroad process, administrative programs, such as the BBA International Programs and first-year programs, provided study abroad assistance. BBA International Programs, as a part of the Commerce Undergraduate Programs Office, facilitates students going abroad, and its presence is a reflection of the study abroad culture. The general ease with which students were able to study abroad is evident. In addition, the website, student evaluations, brochures, and other printed materials from BBA International Programs were essential for many of the students. These sources are artifacts in the study abroad culture that is promoted by Commerce.

Social Environment

Important to note is that much of the social environment of these students is related to and a consequence of the culture and climate of the Commerce School of

Business. The First-year Interest Group Program, student organizations and the exchange programs that domestic and foreign students participate in are supported partially or fully by the Commerce School. Year after year, the undergraduate program makes organizational and financial decisions that create and sustain the first-year experience for their students and subsequently motivate students to study abroad.

Most students reported that they had friends in the business school who also studied abroad so there was evidence that the larger social environment promoted study abroad as well. Based on what the students in this study reported, the importance of study abroad is being broadcast by the school during the early college years. The significance of the peer group cannot be underestimated.

Cultural Exposure

Nearly every student in this study reported that cultural exposure was a reason to study abroad. Some students were very specific about the type of culture or country they wished to visit while others wanted exposure to culture in general.

Educational Attainment

Though all of the students in this study were in a prestigious degree-granting program in the Commerce School of Business, most students had additional educational goals. Particular business coursework, new patterns of learning, and general real-world learning were emphasized by some students.

Student Background

Another factor in the decision to study abroad was personal background. Previous travel, parents, and other family members were all elements that influenced

students. A few students also were swayed by their ethnic heritage to not only study abroad but to seek out certain foreign destinations.

Aspirations

Some students targeted study abroad as a necessary experience because their career choices pointed to international corporations or overseas living. Many students reported their desire to study abroad as a life goal; they wanted to experience the larger world around them.

Language and Skill Development

Though language development was critical for some students, it was not a variable for others. Many students wanted to increase familiarity with a certain language while others desired to advance their fluency and to practice conversing with native speakers.

Financial Variables

Financial concerns, such as cost of living and total cost of the program, were reported. These financial issues served to cut out options for students or required them to look for creative ways to fund their study abroad experience. Many students talked about how affordable it was to study abroad via an exchange program. Even students with available resources reported awareness of financial issues.

Study Abroad Expectations

Student expectations of their study abroad experience mostly matched their study abroad reality. Students overwhelmingly reported that their expectations at least somewhat matched their experience. But when asked about where there was a mismatch

in expectation and reality of their study abroad experience, students revealed some issues that the school could take into account when trying to educate their students about their exchange programs.

Study Abroad Experiences

The study abroad experience of these students was positive overall. The Terenzini and Reason (2005) model explains both college student experience and study abroad experience. This model shows how student background influences student experience. The larger peer environment which is also influenced by the organizational context of the university is critical to student experience. Individual student experience takes place within the peer environment to produce outcomes such as learning and development. The study abroad experience of students in this research study was reflected in this model. The next section discusses the applicability of these models.

Implications of the Models

This study explores how students choose to study abroad, what they expect and what they experience while studying abroad. The final research question asked what the implications of these findings are. The models of Study Abroad Choice, Study Abroad Expectations and Study Abroad Experience answer the research questions of the study but for university administrators, the implications of the study reach even further.

Other institutions can also look to the study to inform their study abroad programs as much of the decision making, expectation and experience do not appear to be restricted to this school or university. Several themes emerged from this study that might be helpful for administrators across the country. This study can comment on the

Millennial student abroad, how they get their information, and what assistance they need to be more effective study abroad consumers.

Millennial Students in a Global Village

This research study can also corroborate general college student trends.

Millennial college student characteristics were evident; most students reported all of the core traits of Millennials that are detailed by Howe and Strauss (2007) in *Millennials Go to College*. While the study did not specifically look for Millennial student characteristics, the surprising part of this study was how strong these attributes were communicated by the students. These core traits are Special, Sheltered, Confident, Team-Oriented, Conventional, Pressured and Achieving (Howe & Strauss, 2007).

First, Millennial students are Special, that is, they not only have high expectations of themselves, but they have high expectations placed upon them as well (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Students at RSU are a select group of students. The average SAT score for a fall 2006 entering freshman was over 1200, compared with a nationwide average of 1021 (RSU Statistical Handbook 2006-2007). Further, Commerce students have earned higher GPA's (3.5 average) when compared to the rest of the RSU undergraduate population (3.21 average). Also, parents tend to feel that their child is Special, above others as evidenced by their hovering, or helicopter, behavior. This characteristic leads into the next trait, Sheltered, which was also detailed by students in this study.

Millennial students are more Sheltered than previous generations (Howe & Strauss, 2007). This study demonstrates that Millennial students seem to rely on their

parents for approval and funding for their college career. Most students mentioned their parents' approval (or disapproval) of their desire to study abroad and the extent to which their parents were participating financially in the study abroad semester.

Several students mentioned that their parents would join them at some point in their semester, therefore experiencing a portion of their child's study abroad experience themselves. A few students, all women, reported that they spoke to their parents every single day. These women said they were particularly close to their mothers, both wanting and needing their guidance and friendship. These findings seem to bolster the claim by Howe and Strauss (2004) that:

Whatever you're selling, whether soap, cars, or colleges, the way to connect with Millennials is to brand your image, target the mainstream, wrap yourself around positive youth values, and make room for parents in your message. (p. 7)

Confidence is another trait of the Millennial generation. Confidence is expressed in these students' dreams and passions. Many students talked about "fulfilling a dream" and "having a passion for study abroad." Furthermore, the students in this study expressed confidence in their need to study abroad and in the decisions they made along the way. Eighty-five percent of the students in this study said that they would not change the choices they made about study abroad. Even if concerns about the study abroad experience were revealed, students explained that bumps in the road were expected and required. Development was needed to become the persons they wanted to be, professionally and personally. Confidence was apparent in these participants.

The fourth Millennial feature, being Team-Oriented, was also reflected in this study. Being team-oriented, according to Howe and Strauss (2007), means that these students value both friends and diversity of ethnicities and races. Participants detailed that they wanted to meet people from other cultures and cultural exposure was a reason for them to study abroad. These students are also heavily influenced by their peers. For example, traveling with friends or going to meet friends while abroad was reported by many participants.

Since social environment is so critical to both the Anderson Study Abroad Choice Model and to Millennial students in general, the international exchange of students needs to be emphasized. The students in this study explained that the exchange students or international students at their campuses formed a community at the host institution. Students expected to meet many native students but their experience was that it is more likely for students to meet other international students. Again, universities might want to work on managing expectations so that exchange students can make the most of their experience. Students might need to be coached to expect to meet people of differing nationalities and a diversity of cultures from around the world.

In addition, Millennials are Conventional. They believe in personal responsibility, community standards, and institutional trust. As Howe and Strauss (2007) relate, “To be conventional is to aspire to balance and proportion in one’s life” (p. 138). This age group is also less likely to spend their time intensely on one activity; rather they prefer to spread their time involved in a variety of subjects. Students in this

study reported Conventional traits. They desired a well-rounded experience, both inside and outside the classroom.

Pressured is another Millennial trait. The parents of these students have tried to prepare their children for the world around them. There are high expectations placed on these students by everyone, including themselves. These students are not only expected to get into the best college and then do well in their college career, they are also expected to excel as an entire generation (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Study abroad, for many of the students, is seen as a challenge to overcome. For others, study abroad is seen as a way to get ahead of the competition for future employment.

The final Millennial characteristic is Achieving. According to Howe and Strauss (2007), these students are the smartest and most educated in our nation's history. Additionally, they want to participate in and help create a strong and diverse community by taking leadership roles. Students in this study communicated this need. Study abroad is seen as a way for them to immerse themselves in a new and diverse community and to test out their academic, developmental, and social skills, while making degree progress.

Millennials seem to be perfectly suited and poised to be able to take advantage of the national push for college students to study abroad. They are Sheltered; therefore in the position to benefit greatly from new experiences away from home. But these students are also Special, warranting both parental concern and university attention. Millennials are Confident and Team-Oriented, wanting both peer acceptance but also exposure to new experiences including cultures different than their own. They are

Pressured, pushed by themselves and others to succeed. Study abroad is just one avenue that these students take to improve themselves. Millennials are Achieving; they are entering college and the study abroad experience with the most academic preparation to date. All of these Millennial traits provide motivation from a variety of sources to study abroad.

From Theory to Practice

Study abroad and university administrators can better serve students and the missions of their institutions by taking Millennial traits into account and utilizing the Anderson Study Abroad Choice Model when planning study abroad recruitment and programming. By looking at the four main categories of parents, technology, faculty and staff involvement, and recruiting for the total package, administrators can gain insight into the undergraduates on campus and perhaps increase the numbers of undergraduates studying abroad.

Parents

If universities wish to address the parental element while attempting to increase the number of students abroad, there are several strategies that they can employ. For example, if schools are not offering parent information or orientation sessions in conjunction with the student study abroad sessions, administrators might want to investigate if there is any interest in holding these kinds of sessions. Universities could prepare materials to educate parents that mirror the material that students receive in printed and electronic forms. One example mentioned by a student in the interviews was

the need for parents and students to discuss security and safety plans while abroad.

Having student and parent versions of this material would be valuable.

In addition, colleges can assist both students and parents by making clear where parental involvement is accepted and where it is not. Allowing parents to participate in the college experience without interfering can be beneficial for all involved.

Expectations can be managed more effectively on all sides of the study abroad equation.

Working with parents might also help to increase the number of minority students who study abroad. Some cultures do not condone nor promote travel far away from the family. By partnering with students to educate the family, universities might be able to convince otherwise disapproving parents that study abroad can be beneficial.

Technology

Undergraduate students today have more ready access to information than any previous generation thanks to advances in technology. Every university now has a website; many students have their own websites as well. Students used the web in a variety of ways. Some students researched online in advance of meeting with an advisor so they could ask more thoughtful questions during their appointments. Other students bolstered the information they received from advisors by using the web all through the study abroad process.

Universities should explore new technologies to communicate with students. Some students were documenting their own study abroad experiences via blogs and facebook.com. Jessica, an interviewee, talked at length about using myspace.com to research bands and meet people from her destination before even being accepted to her

study abroad program. Podcasts, blogs, online information videos, and other forms of communication in websites are often not expensive to create or reproduce. Most students are already hooked into some kind of online communication, so schools can take advantage of these additional technological methods to recruit and inform students. Knowing how students and parents get their information can inform any study abroad program.

Faculty and Staff Involvement

Students also get a great deal of information from faculty. Since Millennial students look to adults as exemplars as a part of their Conventional trait, faculty and staff are in a position to influence students in a positive way. For males who are underrepresented consumers of study abroad, this referral aspect may be especially critical. Hearing the concrete, real-world translation of study abroad into career aspirations from an expert may be the tipping point for students considering study abroad as an option.

University staff members have a large role as well. Academic advising is and will continue to be a necessity for the future of study abroad. Study abroad covers such a complex set of expectations and experiences; utilizing the models from this research study can assist advisors in covering all topics. Making the Models of Study Abroad Choice, Expectation and Experience usable for university staff is a matter of working them in the conversation about study abroad. Knowing that certain components of the model weigh more heavily for different students, a variety of methods can be employed.

Using choice and expectation questionnaires, web forms, or worksheets before, during and after the recruiting process is a helpful process. Questions about student background, financials, aspirations, educational values, social environment, cultural exposure, language development and of course, where students want to travel abroad gives a unique snapshot of each student. Students are required to articulate their goals and advisors are better able to take into account the variety of issues that each individual student brings to study abroad. Using the models as rubrics for analysis can ensure thorough planning.

Advisors would also benefit from asking students from where they receive their information so that they can stay up on the trends and assist other students. Even though the technology is advancing, there still appears to be little substitute for face-to-face interaction. Advisors were continually mentioned as both encouraging factors and as sources of information in the study abroad process. Friends and other students who studied abroad were also cited as factors for deciding to study abroad and sources of information; advisors need to recognize this word of mouth and look for ways to let the student grapevine work on their behalf.

Recruiting the Total Package

Increasing the numbers of students studying abroad and maintaining student satisfaction can be done by recruiting the total package that study abroad provides. Study abroad offers academic, social, and developmental opportunities, and gives Millennial students a plethora of activities to explore. Providing meaningful courses and classroom activities is crucial. Advisors can capitalize on the desire to travel by offering

itineraries for either discipline focused or interdisciplinary trips to nearby destinations. Ties to professionally directed co-curricular activities, like internships or company visits, can further impart to students and parents the advantage of study abroad.

The importance of the social environment cannot be overlooked. Living-learning communities can offer an alternative for students who want to stay with their peers or those students who do not want to do a family stay in a foreign country. The international exchange student communities at the host institutions should be presented to students as a benefit to the experience. Students should expect to meet students from all over the world, not just the host country; at the same time, advisors should anticipate that it will be important for students to want to remain in their own peer group if possible. Above all, study abroad can help students to “break away from a constantly scrutinized, heavily protected childhood and enter into a more self-directed adulthood” (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p. 145).

At the same time, study abroad advisors and other student service professionals, like academic advisors, need to assist students in articulating the learning and development that take place while studying abroad. Reasons to study abroad that were mentioned over and over in this study were to have fun and to travel. Exposure to culture was also listed as important but on the surface, one could imply that these students were not serious about learning. Students need to be able to translate the benefits of their experience to the professional world other than study abroad “is good for my resume.” Millennial students, with their wide range of interests, need particular help in capturing their strengths for employers. Using the Models of Study Abroad

Choice, Expectation and Experience can provide concrete examples for students, parents, administrators, and employers. By helping students become better consumers of study abroad, the student, university, nation and world all benefit.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study could be conducted across an entire university or across multiple institutions depending on the goal of the researcher. For future researchers, it might be more feasible to concentrate on either the decision making phase of study abroad or the study abroad experience phase. While comparing both phases can be beneficial, a thorough examination of each phase is an important step in developing a comprehensive research base for study abroad scholars and also mediating research costs.

Research costs could also be reduced by waiting for students to return to their U.S. universities and then conducting surveys and interviews. In this way, surveys and interviews could be conducted with more ease over larger populations of college students. Larger studies can further inform recruiting for study abroad and perhaps increase the diversity of participants who choose to study abroad.

Additionally, future studies could be concentrated on specific student populations in which administrators wish to increase participation in study abroad. For example, first-generation college students, those with no sibling to pave the way before them, could be considered as a separate study. Minority men are another group that warrant special consideration due to their under representation in study abroad programs. Student decision making in the natural sciences and engineering fields could

be examined as these students are also under represented amongst college study abroad participants nationwide.

Since Millennial students are influenced heavily by their parents, a worthwhile and interesting study would be conducted on parents of Millennials. Insight could be gained on how parents interact with and influence their college students. Since studying abroad for a semester is such a big decision, the interaction between student and parent on this topic should be dynamic and informative for administrators.

Summary

This research demonstrates that there is a multifaceted nature to both the general college student experience and the subsequent study abroad experience. In reviewing more than 30 years of research, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, 2005) concluded that *multiple forces* operate in *multiple settings* to influence student learning and persistence. Study abroad can be included in this statement. Just as the College Experience Model of Terenzini and Reason (2005) “attempts to provide for all those factors and to identify and map the nature and dynamics of the complex array of forces shaping students’ first year,” the Study Abroad Experience Model attempts to do the same for study abroad (p. 2).

Conclusion

It is an exciting time for higher education. Our students are smarter, more focused, and in a position to make the most of their university experience. Technology, ever progressing, allows communication to take place at a rapid speed. Internationalization and globalization move the peoples of the world closer and closer

together. Study abroad is an important worldwide activity that students can take advantage of to better themselves and the larger world around them.

Survey Instrument

1. Sex: Male Female

3. Which of the following comes closest to describing your race or ethnic group?

- A. _____ Black or African-American
B. _____ Latino/a or Hispanic
C. _____ White or European-American
D. _____ Asian/Pacific Islander-American
E. _____ Native American
F. _____ Middle Eastern-American
G. _____ Other (please specify)

A. _____ Freshman
B. _____ Sophomore
C. _____ Junior
D. _____ Senior
E. _____ 5th year senior

A. _____ Heterosexual
B. _____ Homosexual
C. _____ Bisexual
D. _____ Unsure
E. _____ Other (please specify)

A. _____ \$0-\$40,000
B. _____ \$40,000-60,000
C. _____ \$60,000-80,000
D. _____ \$80,000-100,000
E. _____ \$100,000+

7. List the country of your study abroad program: _____

8. In what country were you born? _____

9. Indicate the amount of time (in months) that you have spent traveling or living in a foreign country.

10. When did you first start to think about studying abroad (please choose one)?

A. _____ Before high school

B. _____ During high school

C. _____ Freshman year of college

D. _____ Sophomore year of college

E. _____ Junior year or senior year of college

F. _____ Other (please describe) _____

11. Who encouraged you to pursue study abroad? (Check as many as apply)

Parents

Friends

University staff

Faculty

12. Describe the process of deciding to study abroad in as much detail as possible.

13. What were the most important factors in making this decision?

14. What were your expectations for your study abroad experience?
15. Now that you are abroad, describe how your experience has been so far.
16. Would you change anything about the way you decided to study abroad?
17. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX TWO

Interview Protocol

1. When did you first start to think about studying abroad? (How did you find out about it?)
2. Who (and/or what) encouraged you to pursue study abroad? (Parents, peers, university staff, professors, etc.)
3. Describe the process of deciding to study abroad.
4. What were the most important factors in making this decision?
5. What were your expectations for your study abroad experience?
6. Now that you are abroad, describe how your experience has been so far.
7. Would you change anything about the way you decided to study abroad?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

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VITA

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